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**Mobilizing the Moral Majority: Paul Weyrich and the Creation of a
Conservative Coalition, 1968-1988**

Tyler J. Poff

**Thesis submitted
to the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences
at West Virginia University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in
History**

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ABSTRACT

Mobilizing the Moral Majority: Paul Weyrich and the Creation of a Conservative Coalition, 1968-1988

Tyler J. Poff

This study examines the growth of the conservative movement in twentieth century America through the political network built by conservative activist, Paul M. Weyrich. Weyrich is heralded as a founding father of the New Right political movement and credited as a founding member of three major political think tanks. This study aims to more accurately understand America's rightward political turn, while simultaneously exploring the breakdown of the New Deal Democratic Party coalition. Chapter one offers readers a review of the historiography of conservatism coupled with detailed outlines of the body chapters. Chapter two begins with a biography of Weyrich discussing his entrance into politics, while also providing insight into the Washington political arena Weyrich entered in the late 1960s. The chapter also examines the American Legislative Exchange Council, a think tank devoted to conservative policy at the state level. Chapter three covers the Heritage Foundation, the premier think tank of the right, responsible for much of the conservative intellectual revolution at the national level during the Reagan administration. Chapter four is devoted to the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress (later referred to as the Free Congress Foundation). This chapter examines the organization's role first as a political action committee, devoted to a grassroots movement aimed at ousting liberal Congressional incumbents in favor of conservative representatives. In the late 1970s, this group restructured to become the Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, a think tank responsible for conservative social policy. Chapter five provides concluding remarks as well as a brief history of American politics following the Reagan administration.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1—Introduction	1
Chapter 2—The American Legislative Exchange Council	11
Chapter 3—The Heritage Foundation	37
Chapter 4— The Free Congress Foundation	68
Chapter 5—Conclusion	99
Bibliography	107

Chapter 1—Introduction

My thesis explores the efforts of conservative activists during the late 1960s through the Reagan administration to create a politically powerful conservative coalition to rival the clout of the New Deal coalition that dominated American politics in much of the period following World War II. In particular my research focuses on the efforts of Senate staffer turned activist, Paul Weyrich, to build institutions with the ability to directly influence election cycles and the legislative process. To achieve his ends, Weyrich spent the early 1970s organizing three conservative organizations, the American Legislative Exchange Council, the Heritage Foundation, and the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress. From their offices in Washington, these three tax-exempt research institutions spent the 1970s preparing to lead a conservative revolution which by the decade's end had its first major success at the national level with the election of Ronald Reagan.

Each of Weyrich's think tanks served a unique purpose. The American Legislative Exchange Council, founded in 1973, was conceived with the intent to create model policy for state legislatures, furthering the conservative agenda at the state and local level. The Heritage Foundation, organized the same year, was tasked with affecting change at the national level, producing policy research for both Congress and the president. The Committee for the Survival of Free Congress, founded in 1974, was designed to help elect conservative politicians to Congress, but by the end of the seventies, its focus shifted to promoting cultural conservatism. With Ronald Reagan assuming the presidency in January 1981, these three organizations capitalized on the conservative atmosphere to reshape American politics.

While conservatism, like any political ideology is complex and often difficult to define, historians have generally agreed that its philosophy is centered on a laissez-faire free market

approach to economics, opposition to communism, and an adherence to traditional gender and sexual norms. Analysis of Weyrich's activist work through his Washington think tanks helps to illuminate the links that brought about a political coalition with the ability to topple the already crumbling liberal consensus. From the margins of the Republican Party in the early 1970s, these groups emerged as an active voice in American politics, forcing the party at large to the further right of the political spectrum by the end of the Reagan administration.

The aim of this thesis is three-fold. The first of these goals is to illuminate the history of these understudied organizations, placing their significance in the larger conservative movement. Secondly, the aim of this research is to examine the influence of these institutions on both election cycles and the legislative process. The third purpose I hope to achieve, is to discuss the liberal response to the rise of conservatism during this time, putting the two ideologies in conversation with one another to better understand the breakdown of New Deal liberalism.

To achieve these ends I will examine literature produced by these organizations for consumption by political agents, scholars, and average Americans. These publications consist of model policy proposals, conservative periodicals, and policy research studies. Also, the personal papers of Paul M. Weyrich, housed at the Library of Congress, serve as a valuable source, providing personal correspondence with other actors in the conservative movement, personal memorandums, meeting minutes, and a large collection of newspaper articles and editorials covering Weyrich and his think tanks. Likewise, newspapers from the time provide crucial insight into national perceptions of these organizations. Beyond simply detailing the rise and actions of these think tanks during this time, I hope to put the sources into conversation with one another. On one hand, my thesis will outline the history of these organizations, and their

contributions to the conservative movement as a whole. On the other hand, I also hope to address liberalism's response to conservative victories.

Historiography

In the last several decades, the history of the modern American conservative movement has become a blossoming field of study with a deeply rich historiography. Early studies claimed the breakdown of liberalism and the growth of the Right were products of the intense battles of the 1960 and 1970s over prevailing notions on race, class, and gender, championed by the antiwar, civil rights, welfare rights, student, and feminist movements of the time.¹ Historians have also outlined a strong response from white and urban working-class Americans to affirmative action, busing, and desegregation as crucial in understanding the growth of conservatism.² Allen J. Lichtman's *White Protestant Nation: The Rise of the American Conservative Movement* examines the conservative movement from post-World War I racial and fascist groups through the new century, identifying the idea of America as a white Protestant nation as the driving force of American conservatism.³ Historians Kevin M. Kruse, Matt Lassiter, and Joseph Crespino have traced the roots of the modern conservative movement to the postwar Sunbelt where the middle-class of the suburbs abandoned explicitly racial dialogue in favor of a rights-based approach to combatting higher taxes and racial integration.⁴ Likewise,

¹ Dan T. Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); Thomas B. Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics*. New York, NY: Norton, 1992).

² Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

³ Allen J. Lichtman, *White Protestant Nation: The Rise of the American Conservative Movement* (New York, NY: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2008).

⁴ Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Matt Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

Edward H. Miller's *Nut Country: Right-Wing Dallas and the Birth of the Southern Strategy* focuses on Dallas, Texas during the 1950s and 1960s as a calculated center of the so-called "southern strategy" to adopt the color-blind approach to race in order to sanitize ultraconservative ideas in the heart of the Sunbelt.⁵ Lisa McGirr's analysis of the 1960s Orange County, California suburbs posits that anticommunism served as the link between fiscal conservatives and religious and social conservatives.⁶ Still other scholars have highlighted conservatism's long history and the partnership between business and evangelicals in shaping the ideals of American conservatives.⁷ Kruse's *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*, chronicles the history of religion in politics during the twentieth century. It traces the roots of this movement from a Christian-libertarian alliance in the 1930s in opposition to the New Deal to the enshrinement of religion in American politics and culture during the Eisenhower administration under the charge of evangelical ministers such as Billy Graham, and the ways in which subsequent politicians have capitalized on these religious themes.⁸ *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s*, a collection of historical essays edited by Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, examines the 1970s as a critical turning point establishing the foundations of current political debate.⁹

Labor historians studying the expansion of conservative thought in the twentieth century have outlined a firm response from business in the postwar years to peel back the gains made by

⁵ Edward H. Miller, *Nut Country: Right-Wing Dallas and the Birth of the Southern Strategy* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2015).

⁶ Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁷ William C. Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York, NY: Broadway Books, 1996); Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012).

⁸ Kevin M. Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2015).

⁹ Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, eds., *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

labor unions and increased governmental regulation in the wake of the New Deal. In the aftermath of the Second World War the working class and organized labor worked diligently to maintain the gains they had made during the wartime mobilization, which saw government take an active role in the private sector of production. However, big business fought back ensuring that these gains, which mostly occurred in the white working class, were curtailed. Elizabeth Fones-Wolf traces these efforts by business to shape the political culture of the postwar period.¹⁰ In her work, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-60*, she outlines an organized campaign by business organizations such as the Business Advisory Council, the Committee for Economic Development, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the Chamber of Commerce to use radio, television, and print to promote a vision of free enterprise centered on freedom, individualism, and competition. In the factory, community, school, and churches, propaganda campaigns were launched with the aim of dividing workers from unions and the national government. By the 1960s business had succeeded in painting labor as corrupt and radical—helping to sever their relationship with workers in the era of rampant anticommunism. Building on Fones-Wolf’s work, historian Kim Phillips-Fein examines the role of business within several conservative organizations and causes from the New Deal through the Reagan Era.¹¹ Her publication, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan*, illuminates the efforts of wealthy businessmen to shape the political culture of the country through organizations such as the Liberty League, the National Association of Manufacturers, the Foundation for Economic Education, the American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation, and the Business Roundtable. Throughout her analysis,

¹⁰ Elizabeth A. Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-60* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

¹¹ Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009).

Phillips-Fein maintains the central role businessmen such as Pierre du Pont, Joseph Coors, Roger Milliken, and Richard Mellon Scaife played in shaping and funding the modern American conservative movement.

Scholars have begun also begun to acknowledge the influence of outside agents on governmental processes. Historian Benjamin C. Waterhouse, in his work *Lobbying America: The Politics of Business from Nixon to NAFTA*, examines the histories of the United States Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the Business Roundtable to better understand the business community's response to the economic disasters of the 1970s and the perceived government intrusion by agencies such as Consumer Protection Agency and Environmental Protection Agency. Both Waterhouse and Kim Phillips-Fein devote careful attention to a document referred to as the Powell Memorandum when discussing the mobilization of the business community in the 1970s. The memorandum, officially titled, "Attack on American Free Enterprise System" was penned in 1971 by corporate lawyer Lewis Powell. The memorandum was prepared for Eugene Sydnor, Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce's Education committee. Sydnor, a close friend of Powell's, had requested his advice regarding the political challenges business faced. Powell's memo outlined a belief that a cultural assault on the values of free-market capitalism was the central issue facing business, spurred on by economic regulations, inflationary spending, increasingly intrusive labor laws, and high taxes. Although the document was meant for only the eyes of the Chamber of Commerce, it quickly spread through the business community, sending ripples outward.¹² Reflecting on the impact of the Powell Memorandum, historian Benjamin C. Waterhouse claims, "Conceptually the document broke very little ground; business leaders had been voicing many of the same concerns for years,

¹² Benjamin C. Waterhouse, *Lobbying America: The Politics of Business from Nixon to NAFTA* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 58-60.

if not as eloquently or persuasively. Thus rather than a clarion call for a counter-mobilization by conservative businesspeople, the Powell Memorandum is better understood as a tool for institution building.”¹³ The institutions that emerged as a result of the Powell Memorandum include Weyrich’s three Washington think tanks.

Similarly, *Right Moves: The Conservative Think Tank in American Political Culture Since 1945*, by Jason Stahl, traces how think tanks have influenced the course of American politics in the postwar era, detailing the history of the American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation and their unique approach to the role of a think tank in policy debate.¹⁴ Stahl’s work also explores the period following the Reagan administration that saw the influence of conservative think tanks force Democratic Party strategists to explore a rightward shift under the Democratic Leadership Council and its influential think tank, the Progressive Policy Institute, responsible for many policy positions behind the Clinton administration in the 1990s. Stahl concludes that, “Instead of creating an ideologically diverse market of ideas, conservatives wielded this new model [of think tank championed by AEI and Heritage] in a much more limited way—focusing instead on the obsessive need for ‘balance’ in policy debates. In a balanced marketplace of ideas, what was really important was having only two positions: ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’.”¹⁵ Stahl argues that this dichotomy forced Democrats to the right, policing themselves of all signs of overt liberalism.

Little has been written about the history of the Weyrich’s organizations, especially the American Legislative Exchange Council and the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, and their role in the mobilization of a conservative movement. However, these groups have

¹³ Waterhouse, *Lobbying America*, 59.

¹⁴ Jason Stahl, *Right Moves: The Conservative Think Tank in American Political Culture Since 1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

¹⁵ Stahl, *Right Moves*, 198.

played a significant role in furthering the conservative agenda in the latter half of the twentieth century and deserve due attention. The aim of this thesis is not to claim that Weyrich and his organizations were solely responsible for the conservative victories of the 1980s or the conservative movement as a whole. Instead, I hope to add to the literature by examining the unique approach Weyrich undertook in adopting liberal grassroots mobilization to unite the conservative business community with evangelical and social conservatives to create a consensus large enough to supplant the liberal majority. This business opposition to liberalism, predating even the New Deal, coupled with religious fervor and social conservatism at the height of these think tanks influence in the 1980s, resulted in a growing wave of conservative sympathy in the United States.

Chapter Outlines

Chapter two begins with a brief political biography of Paul Weyrich, examining the factors driving Weyrich and touching on his significance to the conservative movement. The rest of the chapter revolves around the American Legislative Exchange Council, Weyrich's vehicle to spread conservative model policy into the state legislature of the country—bypassing the gridlock of federal bureaucracy. This chapter also provides thorough context to the political crises the country was consumed with leading into the election cycle of 1968, as well as a discussion of the historic roots of the conservative movement in the early twentieth century. The chapter concentrates on the American Legislative Exchange Council's early interests, including the 1978 District of Columbia Voting Rights Amendment, rollback of the social welfare net through "New Federalism," urban enterprise zones, resistance to economic sanctions against the apartheid regime in South Africa, and opposition to the newly emerging political power of LGBT groups.

Chapter three focuses on the Heritage Foundation, tracing its history from a small burgeoning collection of conservative intellectuals to its role as the premier policy institution of the right. The relationship between Weyrich and brewery magnate and businessman Joseph Coors, responsible for the financial backing that led to the think tank's organization, is detailed in this chapter. Of special interest is the role of the organization in the Reagan administration during the group's most influential period. The chapter examines Heritage's inception as the antithesis to the Brookings Institution, the most famous think tank of its era. This analysis examines how Heritage changed the role of think tanks in Washington, providing concise and timely research that could have a more direct impact on the legislative process. This chapter examines Heritage's efforts to influence legislation at the federal level in both the legislative and executive branch. These efforts included a rollback of federal spending, the promotion of free market values, and producing foreign policy designed to combat the spread of communism and strengthen American military power.

Chapter four examines the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress. Another group financially backed by Coors, this political action committee sought to strategically devote resources and assets to elect conservative politicians to congress, supplanting the "liberal" majority. The organization was conceived as a rival to liberal grassroots campaign successes. The group maintained that it held no partisan ties, targeting both incumbent Democrats and liberal Republicans. The Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress created a grassroots fundraising campaign with the help of direct mail expert Richard Viguerie. The group restructured in 1978, becoming the think tank, the Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, often shortened to the Free Congress Foundation, with the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress remaining as the political action committee arm of the Foundation.

In the 1980s the Free Congress Foundation turned its attention to the Supreme Court with a campaign against “activist judges.” Likewise, Free Congress explored different avenues for creating a conservative political coalition between fiscal and social conservatives. The Free Congress Foundation also began a movement of cultural conservatism revolving around social issues, topics both the American Legislative Exchange Council and the Heritage Foundation tended to stray away from. In sum, Weyrich’s think tank was responsible for carving a niche in the conservative platform for evangelical Christians.

Chapter 2—The American Legislative Exchange Council

During Richard Nixon's first term in office, Paul Weyrich, an assistant to Colorado Senator Gordon L. Allot and a relative newcomer to Washington, stumbled into a meeting of key Washington liberals preparing to enact a housing bill. At this meeting he witnessed a White House official, a newspaper columnist, a Brookings Institution analyst, African-American lobbyists, and a dozen Senate staffers working diligently to advance their cause—each with their own unique purpose in the operation. At the meeting's end, the White House official agreed to keep all present up-to-date on the administration's plans moving forward, the columnist guaranteed a favorable piece covering the legislation, the Brookings analyst assured all that a study would be published in time to affect the debate, the lobbyists promised public demonstrations, and the Senate aides pledged the support of their bosses.¹⁶ Weyrich had witnessed firsthand the effectiveness of political coalitions and strategy. According to historian Lee Edwards, Weyrich recalled, "I saw how easily it could be done, with planning and determination, and decided to try it myself."¹⁷ Weyrich spent the rest of his life in the political arena working to replicate these tactics he saw liberals capitalizing on to advance the conservative movement in America by creating a similar type of infrastructure for the political right.

Paul Michael Weyrich was born October 7, 1942 in Racine, Wisconsin. The son of a German immigrant, Ignatius Weyrich, who worked as a furnace stoke for fifty years in a Catholic hospital, Weyrich was brought up in a family that treated both religion and politics as

¹⁶ Lee Edwards, *The Conservative Revolution: The Movement that Remade America* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1999), 185; Edwards was a founding member of Young Americans for Freedom and became a defining voice for conservatism, writing for many major newspapers and magazines, and later penning histories of the conservative movement and biographies of its leaders.

¹⁷ Edwards, *The Conservative Revolution*.

serious matters.¹⁸ Weyrich was raised as a Roman Catholic but converted to the Melkite Greek Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council.¹⁹ In his later life, he became a deacon in the ultra-conservative church, with his religious convictions serving as the guiding principle of his life's work. From an early age he was motivated to affect change, and in his youth, he and several friends led a grassroots campaign to save a train route from Milwaukee to Chicago, and throughout his life he remained a train enthusiast.²⁰ In 1960 as a student at University of Wisconsin, he became involved with the Young Republicans, and in 1964 worked on Barry Goldwater's presidential campaign. Weyrich did not finish school and instead went to work as a political journalist for several midwestern radio stations in Wisconsin and Colorado. Due to his keen political insight, Weyrich was named press secretary and staff assistant on transportation to Colorado Senator Gordon L. Allot, and in 1967 he moved to Washington D.C. to work for Senator Allot until 1970. In 1973 he joined the staff of Nebraska Senator Carl Curtis.²¹

Before moving forward, perhaps it is necessary to discuss the political climate of the country when Paul Weyrich first began his career in Washington, D.C. Opposition to the New Deal, the landmark reform of the Roosevelt administration and the embodiment of American liberalism, was present almost from its inception. In 1934 business leaders formed the Liberty League along with other organizations such as the National Association of Manufacturers that subsequently launched a campaign to peel away the labor gains achieved during the wartime

¹⁸ Bruce Weber, "Paul Weyrich, 66, a Conservative Strategist, Dies," *New York Times*, December 18, 2008, accessed December 30, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/19/us/politics/19weyrich.html>.

¹⁹ Patricia Sullivan, "Paul M. Weyrich: 1942-2008, A Father of Modern Conservative Movement," *Washington Post*, December 19, 2008, accessed December 30, 2017, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/18/AR2008121801771.html?sub=AR22>.

²⁰ Sullivan, "Paul M. Weyrich: 1942-2008, A Father of Modern Conservative Movement," *Washington Post*, December 19, 2008, accessed December 30, 2017.

²¹ Carl Curtis is remembered as a conservative political icon. His election into the United States House of Representatives in 1938 was due in large part to his opposition to the New Deal policies of the Roosevelt administration. He successfully ran for the United States Senate in 1954, holding the office from 1955 to 1979. Curtis was a close ally to both Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon.

mobilization. Their crowning achievement was the passage of the Labor Management Relations Act of 1947, commonly referred to as the Taft-Hartley Act, which constrained the power of unions. In the era of the Cold War under the heavy hand of Joseph McCarthy, anti-communism became a popular ideology, and fringe groups such as the John Birch Society sprang up, promoting literature targeting the international communist threat. The work of William F. Buckley, Jr., who founded the conservative *National Review* magazine in 1955, helped to coalesce conservative ideology. America faced new racial conflicts in the wake of Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which declared segregation in public schools unconstitutional, and the ensuing civil rights movement. In 1964, Arizona Senator and conservative icon, Barry Goldwater, launched a presidential campaign to challenge incumbent Democrat Lyndon B. Johnson. Although Goldwater lost the election handily, his presidential bid marked a turning point in American politics, with Goldwater galvanizing many young conservatives into action and carrying the deep South, an area traditionally won by Democrats. Johnson's subsequent Great Society programs, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and his escalation of the war in Vietnam, left the nation deeply divided by 1968. Speaking to the tension enveloping American society at the critical moment, historian William H. Chafe, notes:

Racial hatred ran rampant throughout the land. Working-class whites exploded in rage against blacks who demanded immediate access to power, and against a 'liberal establishment' that seemed to pamper and indulge the forces of protest. Women's liberation advocates revolted against traditional assumptions of male dominance in the family; student radicals lost faith in government which they felt had betrayed them; and the very notion that Americans could find a way out of their dilemma through elections and established democratic procedures was greeted with derision by many.²²

²² William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 329.

Certainly, tensions ran high as the year began. In January, the North Vietnamese launched the Tet Offensive. The offensive carried on for weeks, further complicating matters for the already overburdened Johnson administration. Johnson, now facing opposition within the Democratic Party from the anti-war Democrats under Eugene McCarthy, was barraged by criticism from the from both sides of the political aisle as Walter Cronkite reported nightly on the chaos in Vietnam. By the end of March, feeling besieged, Johnson famously declared he would not seek reelection. As Johnson stepped aside he threw his support to Vice President Hubert Humphrey as the Democratic nominee. In April, the country was racked with tragedy when Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, driving further racial division across the nation. Likewise, the political climate of the country began to further deteriorate when Robert Kennedy, on the heels of a hard-fought primary victory in California, was shot and killed at the Ambassador Hotel in San Francisco.

When the shattered Democratic Party met in Chicago in August 1968, anxiety hung in the air. With Kennedy now dead and McCarthy lacking the delegates necessary to secure the nomination, Humphrey was propelled to the candidacy. As demonstrators flooded the city, tensions came to a head between the protestors and the Chicago police. What followed were the first cracks in the coalition the Democratic Party had built from the New Deal to the Great Society, televised for the country to see.

Present to capitalize on this catastrophe was Richard M. Nixon, the Republican Party's nominee. Following the announcement of his candidacy in February, Nixon enjoyed a relatively easy primary campaign. According to Chafe, "Nixon convinced the party—and reporters as well—that there was now a 'new Nixon,' reflective, mature, and ideally prepared to turn his

years of experience into a new round of service to his country and his party.”²³ Thus, Richard Nixon was able to exploit the political calamity of 1968, by appealing as a “law and order” candidate, while at the same time lambasting the leadership of the country for the state of affairs. Nixon success in 1968 was the result of his appeal to the “forgotten Americans,” or as he dubbed them, the Silent Majority. Nixon was able to paint himself as a personification of traditional American values—a champion to the “average, alienated, white American.”²⁴ Despite the abysmal turnout at the polls in 1968, with less than three out of five eligible voters participating, Nixon rode to victory, forever altering the political climate in the United States.

Although Nixon won the support of alienated white Americans in 1968, some conservatives remained skeptical of the administration for its apparent continuation of liberal policies. As the federal government continued to expand under the Nixon administration, hardline conservatives became increasingly disillusioned with the Nixon White House. The National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 and the subsequent creation of the Environmental Protection Agency were just some of their many grievances. According to Historian Benjamin Waterhouse, “Despite Nixon’s conservative reputation and his ‘New Federalism’ initiative that devolved social welfare spending to the state, his embrace of not only price controls but also more muscular social regulation—including especially the EPA and OSHA, both created in 1970— Reinforced many business leader’s concerns that he was at best a fair-weather friend.”²⁵ In the eyes of conservative business people this legislation represented just another intrusion of government into the free market, and by extension an attack on American business and freedom.

²³ Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 360.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 361.

²⁵ Benjamin C. Waterhouse, *Lobbying America: The Politics of Business from Nixon to NAFTA* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 109.

All this left an opening for men like Paul Weyrich who were eager to help recast American politics in a more conservative direction. In *The New Right Papers*, discussing his entrance into the political arena of Washington amid this chaos, Weyrich wrote:

When I, and others like Howard Phillips, Ed Feulner and Richard Dingman, came to Capitol Hill, we were looking for a Senator or Congressman to whom we could attach ourselves in a support capacity. We were looking, in other words, for leaders. But we quickly found there were none. Goldwater had provided some leadership in the early 1960s as had Senator Strom Thurmond and a few others in isolated instances. But by the late 1960s there was no such leader.²⁶

In Washington, Weyrich quickly made friends in many conservative circles. These connections coupled with his activist attitude spurred Weyrich into action. By the early 1970s Weyrich's Washington connections secured him the funding of concerned businessman and brewery magnate Joseph Coors in the wake of the Powell Memorandum. These first years in Washington proved to be eventful for Weyrich. In 1973, he organized both American Legislative Exchange Council, the Heritage Foundation, and in 1974 founded the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, a political action committee again with Coors's backing.²⁷

Elaborating on the tactics of liberals and the shortcomings of the Old Right that ruled the Republican Party, Weyrich wrote:

Conservatives, by the 1970s, were on the way to forming the organizations necessary to launch and keep afloat a political movement. The Left had the Democratic Study Group in the House of Representatives, an ultra-liberal, member-formed backup operation for left-wing issues, dedicated to cranking out research, thinking up strategy, writing speeches, doing footwork, causing things to happen for the Left in general.²⁸

²⁶ Robert W. Whitaker, ed., *The New Right Papers* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 59.

²⁷ In 1977, the organization's name was changed to the Free Congress Foundation. Recently, the organization changed its name again and now operates under the title of the American Opportunity Foundation, according to their website.

²⁸ Whitaker, *The New Right Papers*, 59.

He continued, “There was no comparable conservative operation at all until 1973. Until 1970, conservative members of Congress barely met with each other at all to talk politics and strategy.”²⁹ By mid-decade Weyrich emerged as one of the leading conservative activists in Washington, and a founding father of the New Right—a political force which he described as, “A coalition of single interest groups organized around, anti-busing, tax resistance, defense issues, parents’ rights, private school survival, energy self-sufficiency, and other major issues.”³⁰ Explaining Weyrich’s significance to the conservative movement in the latter half of the twentieth century, Richard Viguerie, a storied American conservative figure and leading innovator of the political direct mail campaigns of the New Right, claimed that Paul Weyrich was the least well-known of the four pillars of modern conservatism, with the three other pillars consisting of Barry Goldwater, William F. Buckley, Jr., and Ronald Reagan.³¹ Viguerie was a close friend of Paul Weyrich and played a central role in the founding of the Moral Majority in the late 1970s.

While the assault on business by the federal government spurred businessmen like Joseph Coors into action, Weyrich was driven by his belief in the erosion of traditional American values, chief among these, religion. Of special concern to Weyrich was the landmark Supreme Court ruling in *Roe v. Wade*. In a memorandum in his files, dated April 16, 1973 Weyrich mused, “Since this is Holy Week in the Christian world, I thought it appropriate to pause a moment to reflect on where we stand in this year of our Lord, 1973.”³² Revealing his deep religious convictions, he continued, “Ours is a war between truth and untruth. It is one facet of

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 60.

³¹ Weber, “Paul Weyrich, 66, a Conservative Strategist, Dies,” *New York Times*, December 18, 2008.

³² Paul Weyrich, Memorandum, April 16, 1973, Box 5, Folder 1, Paul M. Weyrich Scrapbooks, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

the war between good and evil ... This Nation was founded upon and more closely followed Christian principles than any other.”³³ Referencing the *Roe v Wade* ruling, Weyrich lamented, “These are indeed the saddest of times. We must not stand by helpless while our freedom is completely robbed from us. We must not sit here and do nothing while nine men rule that the unborn have no right to life. We cannot permit the secularist religion to determine our earthly salvation.”³⁴ Likewise, his contribution to *The New Right Papers* concludes on a religious note claiming, “It is basic to my philosophy that God’s truth ought to be manifest politically. Collectivism, which is what the Left is advocating for in a thousand guises, is an error. The New Right coalition is the only organized substantial effort opposing and speaking truth to its power. I believe with truth on our side we have great cause for hope.”³⁵ Thus, Paul Weyrich foresaw that business and religion could become unlikely partners in fighting back the “intrusion” of the liberal elite into the economics and lives of the forgotten Americans, who just five years earlier had turned to Richard Nixon in hope of return to stability. It was in this environment that Paul Weyrich began to build new conservative institutions.

On June 28, 2010, *The Nation* published a short expose on the American Legislative Exchange Council, a Washington-based conservative think tank. The piece, “Where Bad Bills Come From,” outlined the organization’s role in the creation of probusiness state level environmental legislation, funded by America’s largest corporations including, ExxonMobil, Koch Industries, and Peabody Energy.³⁶ Writer Nicholas Kusnetz explained the process noting, “ALEC formed its issue based task forces, jointly run by corporate representatives and state legislators, to write and approve model legislation which members can then bring back to state

³³ Weyrich, Memorandum, April 16, 1973, Paul M. Weyrich Scrapbooks.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Whitaker, *The New Right Papers*, 62.

³⁶ Nicholas Kusnetz, “Where Bad Bills Come From,” *The Nation*, June 28, 2010, 22.

legislators. The organization claims almost two thousand members, nearly a third of all state legislators.”³⁷ The expose goes on to outline ALEC’s role in the increasing influence of corporations and monied interests in American politics at the especially crucial state level.

Beyond the funding from energy corporations interested in rolling back environmental regulation, Kusnetz also pointed to other monied interests paying for a stake in ALEC’s agenda stating, “The organization is also behind efforts in dozens of states to nullify the healthcare overhaul with model legislation openly written under the guidance of a health insurance executive.”³⁸ Kusnetz closed his piece referencing the words of former ALEC director Samuel Brunelli almost thirty years ago:

Take the countryside, and the capital will fall ... [ALEC’s goal is to ensure that] “State legislators are so well informed, so well armed, that they can set the terms of the public policy debate ... This is the infrastructure that will reclaim the states for our movement, these are the people who will make conservative policy; this is our army that we must prepare and support for the battles at hand.”³⁹

For over forty years the American Legislative Exchange Council has contributed to an increasing wave of conservative thought in both American society and politics. Historians of the conservative movement have outlined a steady effort from business lobbies in the postwar years to peel back the gains made by labor unions and increased governmental regulation in the wake of the New Deal by actively shaping the ideological landscape of the country through political activism. While larger institutions aimed at national policy such as the Business Advisory Council, the National Association of Manufacturers, the Business Roundtable, and the Heritage Foundation, have been the focus of many scholars, little has been written about the history of the American Legislative Exchange Council and its role in the mobilization of a conservative

³⁷ Kusnetz, “Where Bad Bills Come From,” *The Nation*, June 28, 2010, 23.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Quoted from Kusnetz, “Where Bad Bills Come From,” *The Nation*, June 28, 2010, 24.

movement. However, the group has played a unique role in furthering the conservative agenda in the latter half of the twentieth century by targeting state legislatures as an avenue of mobilization and action.

Founded in 1973 and still active today, the American Legislative Exchange Council is classified as a non-profit, tax exempt think tank dedicated to drafting model legislation for state legislatures. According to their website:

The American Legislative Exchange Council is America's largest nonpartisan, voluntary membership organization of state legislators dedicated to the principles of limited government, free markets and federalism. Comprised of nearly one-quarter of the country's state legislators and stakeholders from across the policy spectrum, ALEC members represent more than sixty million Americans and provide jobs to more than thirty million people in the United States.⁴⁰

In truth, ALEC is a business-supported organization created to advance the conservative agenda by directly courting state senators and representatives. ALEC's goal is to circumvent the difficulty of passing legislation at the federal level by pushing their model legislation through the more easily influenced and proactive state governments. As such, ALEC serves as an avenue for large corporate interests to create probusiness model policy to be introduced by the state legislators. While state legislators are often more prolific in creating laws than the federal government, many of these politicians are only part-time lawmakers, with relatively small staffs. Understanding the lack of staffing and policy research resources representatives are often faced with, ALEC offers its model policy as an aid to writing legislation. It is ALEC's hope that their organization may also serve as a networking platform for state legislators to reach out to one another so that their model policy can spread from state to state. ALEC has introduced model policy regarding issues such as reducing tax rates for both individuals and corporations,

⁴⁰ American Legislative Exchange Council, "About ALEC," accessed December 3, 2016, <https://www.alec.org/about/>.

combating environmental regulations, restricting voter identification laws, attacking labor unions, and fighting gun control.

ALEC was founded in 1973 by a faction of conservative thinkers still reeling from the defeat of conservative icon Barry Goldwater in the presidential election of 1964 and unhappy with the results of Nixon's first term and the Watergate scandal that would soon follow. The idea was first broached by Mark Rhoads, an Illinois state house staffer, who with Paul Weyrich developed the idea of creating, "a caucus for conservative lawmakers with a conservative staff."⁴¹ After consulting others about the idea, the word conservative was dropped, and the title the American Legislative Exchange Council was adopted instead. Juanita Bartnett served as the organization's first executive director, and co-founder Paul Weyrich, became a key member of the Board of Directors. As ALEC began to solicit funds, the Scaife Foundation donated some 80,000 dollars to the think tank, allowing for a Weyrich-led takeover of the organization that saw Bartnett expelled from her position and the think tank move its offices to Washington.⁴²

In addition to leading ALEC, Weyrich remained active in national conservative politics. As Watergate engulfed the Nixon White House a year later, conservatives worried that the resulting fallout would damage the burgeoning conservative movement. Likewise, in the fall of 1974 as Gerald Ford assumed the Presidency few of their worries were assuaged. To uncompromising conservatives like Paul Weyrich, the Ford presidency spelled disaster for the Republican Party. In a memorandum dated August 26, 1974, Weyrich outlined his grievances

⁴¹ Bill Bishop, *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America is Tearing Us Apart* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), 223.

⁴² Alan Crawford, *Thunder on the Right: The "New Right" and the Politics of Resentment* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1980), 12-13.

with President Ford—namely his failure to actively campaign for Republican politicians in the 1974 mid-term elections.⁴³ Speaking frankly he wrote:

Most of us have come to the conclusion that the Republican Party is an unworkable vehicle in the long run. However, it is going to be extremely difficult to pry people loose from the Republican structure toward a ‘third party’ operation. Therefore, we believe it is necessary to have a nation-wide cadre of contacts in virtually all disciplines who will be organized enough on issues that they can eventually be turned into, in essence, a third political force.⁴⁴

Understanding the severity of the situation, Weyrich concluded, “We are going to have to devise extraordinary measures to win any political victory. Congress, the next Congress, will be more hostile than this one and it is simply not going to be feasible to influence the White House to any great degree and, as a consequence, we are going to have to have some means of causing Members of Congress to respond to our points of view.”⁴⁵

By October Weyrich’s anxiety over the mid-term election was reaching a new boiling point. In a special memo to Republican Senator, James McClure of Idaho, Weyrich predicted, “This may be the end of the GOP a la the Whigs in 1854, and if it is, we must be ready to explore other alternatives.”⁴⁶ He recommended to McClure, “A possible post-election conference of conservatives from throughout the nation to determine how to put the pieces back together. This could perhaps be hosted by you, Helms, and Reagan. Low key. But if we are going to wait for Barry Goldwater to act ... we will never survive.”⁴⁷

In November Weyrich’s worst fears were realized. Speaking to the overwhelming Democratic victories in the 1974 election, William Chafe wrote, “Nearly sixty percent of all

⁴³ Paul Weyrich, Memorandum, August 26, 1974, Box 5, Folder 3, Paul M. Weyrich Scrapbooks, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁴ Weyrich, Memorandum, August 26, 1974, Paul M. Weyrich Scrapbooks.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Paul Weyrich, Special Memo to Senator McClure, October 7, 1974, Box 5, Folder 4, Paul M. Weyrich Scrapbooks, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁷ Weyrich, Special Memo to Senator McClure, October 7, 1974, Paul M. Weyrich Scrapbooks.

voters supported the Democrats. Republicans lost forty-eight seats in the House and even Ford's own Grand Rapids district elected a Democrat for the first time since 1910."⁴⁸ Indeed, 1974 resulted in the Democratic Party's greatest majority of the postwar era.⁴⁹ Perhaps it seemed the left had thwarted the creep of conservatism into American politics. However, by the end of the decade, conservatives would once again strike back.

In the 1976 election Weyrich hoped to see a Republican ticket featuring Ronald Reagan.⁵⁰ Indeed, Reagan ran a fierce primary, however, Ford secured the nomination. As such, Weyrich, Richard Viguerie, Lee Edwards, and Howard Phillips, the founder of the Conservative Caucus, explored a strategy to take over the American Independent Party at the 1976 convention, by nominating Viguerie as the AIP's presidential candidate, however, Lester Maddox was chosen to head the ticket instead.⁵¹ Despite Democratic nominee, Jimmy Carter's victory, his coattails proved too short to carry Democrats to an overwhelming victory, with numbers in the Senate and House remaining relatively stable.⁵² Weyrich's growing crusade had failed to elect a conservative to the White House, but it had managed to halt the tide. The burgeoning conservative movement had survived the fallout of Watergate if only by the skin of its teeth. Meanwhile the Carter administration would have its hands full battling the stagflation of the 1970s.

As Weyrich moved into the 1978 election cycle, he stepped down from the Board of Directors at the American Legislative Exchange, to devote more time to another of his

⁴⁸ Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 414.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 412.

⁵⁰ Conservative Leaders and that "Dream Ticket," n.d., Box 5, Folder 5, Paul M. Weyrich Scrapbooks, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵¹ Russ Bellant, *The Coors Connection: How Coors Family Philanthropy Undermines Democratic Pluralism* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1991), 16-17; Crawford, *Thunder on the Right*, 235-239.

⁵² 1976 was the lone presidential election the Democratic Party would win in an almost thirty-year period, with the party not winning any other between 1964 and 1992.

conservative organizations, the Free Congress Foundation. Still he attended and presented at ALEC's 1978 annual meeting, featuring a keynote address entitled, "Taking a Bite out of Big Government."⁵³ According to the program from the meeting, "During the past year the American Legislative Exchange Council has achieved an unprecedented rate of growth that has seen its membership triple, making ALEC America's fastest growing organization of State Legislators and Members of Congress."⁵⁴ Dividends were finally paying off for the organization through Weyrich's mobilization of conservatives.

Having created a strong membership base, in January 1979, ALEC began its first major campaign. On August 22, 1978, the District of Columbia Voting Rights Amendment, an amendment to grant the District of Columbia representation in Congress, was presented in the United States Senate after passing in the House.⁵⁵ The amendment was approved by the Senate and sent to the state legislatures to be ratified. The issue was politically divisive. On one hand liberals championed the amendment, in large part because its ratification would secure three seats in Congress that would undoubtedly fall into Democratic control. Beyond this, there was a high probability that the newly elected representative would be African-American, due to the demographics of Washington. Conservatives rallied against the amendment, opposing the election of any Democrat—let alone an African-American. Others criticized the amendment as an attack on the sovereignty of states and subversion of federalism. The American Legislative Exchange, realizing its opportunity to intervene, leapt into action. In January of 1979, it flooded politicians throughout the country with a publication entitled, *The Washington, D.C.*

⁵³ American Legislative Exchange Council 1978 Annual Meeting Program, August 1978, Box 7, Folder 2, Paul M. Weyrich Scrapbooks, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁴ ALEC 1978 Annual Meeting Program, August 1978, Paul M. Weyrich Scrapbooks.

⁵⁵ The amendment would have provided Washington, D.C. with two senators and one member in the House.

Amendment: A Briefing Book. The publication, a collection of carefully assembled talking points and data, opened with a cordial letter noting, “Because the American Legislative Exchange Council believes that amending the United States Constitution is an awesome responsibility, to be executed only after the most thoughtful deliberation, we are pleased to provide you with this briefing book on the newly proposed Washington D.C. Amendment.”⁵⁶ The majority of the volume is a collection of arguments both for and against the amendment, composed of statistical data, letters from policy advisers, and editorials from newspapers. Accompanied are tables illustrating representatives in support of the amendment. The final pages are devoted to offering notable organizations’ stance on the amendment.

Although the briefing book does present both sides of the argument, the American Legislative Exchange Council’s stance on the issues is outlined in the “Organizations” section of the briefing book. Per a resolution from their 1978 Annual Meeting, “Whereas, the proposed amendment would award full statehood rights to the District of Columbia while failing to require it to fulfill any of the responsibilities and obligations of statehood ... this amendment would subvert the federal system and the sovereignty of the states.”⁵⁷ In closing they resolved, “By the American Legislative Exchange Council assembled in Annual Meeting that we do call upon the fifty states to reject the proposed constitutional amendment granting congressional and senatorial representation to the District of Columbia.”⁵⁸

The briefing book cited a Pennsylvania AFL-CIO newsletter from September 1978 as evidence of labor’s support of the amendment. The article read, “AFL-CIO President George Meany, noting the labor federation ‘has actively sought (the amendment) for many years,’ asked

⁵⁶ American Legislative Exchange Council, *The Washington, D.C. Amendment: A Briefing Book* (Washington, D.C.: American Legislative Exchange Council, 1979).

⁵⁷ American Legislative Exchange Council, *The Washington, D.C. Amendment*.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

the state labor federations to commit their resources to the ratification campaign.”⁵⁹ Likewise, included was a newsletter from the National Organization for Women detailing their stance on the issue, adopted by NOW at their April meeting in 1978. Drawing on a rich history of feminists fighting for universal suffrage the resolution adopted stated, “Therefore, be it resolved, that this National Conference of the National Organization for Women urge all NOW members and sub-units to ratify the proposed Constitutional Amendment to give Congressional voting representation to the citizens of the District of Columbia.”⁶⁰ ALEC stood in direct opposition to both women and labor in the debate over the Washington, D.C. amendment. Likewise, the Washington, D.C. amendment appeared in their publication *The Source Book of American State Legislation: 1980*. The book featured a model resolution for state legislators to officially voice their opposition to the amendment.⁶¹

Reporting on the mobilization of conservatives, the *Washington Post* noted, “Drawing on lessons learned belatedly in their fight against the Equal Rights Amendment, conservative political groups are uniting in a highly planned, well-financed campaign against the proposed constitutional amendment that would give the District of Columbia full voting representation in Congress.”⁶² The article continued:

Formal opposition to the amendment, which would give the District two senators and one or two House members, has been noted by the American Conservative Union, the Conservative Caucus, the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms, Young Americans for Freedom and the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), along with individuals whose primary concerns vary from gun control, right-to-life, western land development, and states’ rights.⁶³

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ American Legislative Exchange Council, *The Source Book of American State Legislation: 1980* (Washington, D.C.: American Legislative Exchange Council, 1979), 67-69.

⁶² Donald P. Baker, “Conservative Groups Organize Fight Against D.C. Amendment,” *Washington Post*, December 3, 1978.

⁶³ Baker, “Conservative Groups Organize Fight Against D.C. Amendment,” *Washington Post*, December 3, 1978.

Elaborating on ALEC's role in the drastic change in conservative organizational methods, the news story quoted Donna J. Carlson, chairman of ALEC saying, "We're not going to make the mistake we did with ERA, which was ratified by thirty states before opponents got organized."⁶⁴

According to the article:

ALEC spent 15,000 dollars this weekend to bring about fifty legislators here from thirty-six states for a seminar on how to stop ratification of the D.C. amendment and hear Phyllis Schlafly predict that ERA still will be beaten...The money spent by ALEC—which has a 300,000 dollar annual budget raised from a mailing list of twenty-three thousand conservative donors—is more than the grand total raised so far by supporters of the amendment.⁶⁵

ALEC's financing and efforts proved successful in blocking the Washington D.C. Amendment. The amendment was ratified by only sixteen states by the time of its expiration on August 22, 1985, falling short of the necessary two-thirds needed for the proposed amendment to have been adopted. ALEC had emerged from the hard-fought campaign victoriously.

Before the decade ended, Weyrich made another major contribution to the conservative movement, coining the phrase the "moral majority" and offering the name to televangelist and conservative activist Jerry Falwell for his newly formed political action committee.⁶⁶ At the turn of the decade the American Legislative Exchange Council had begun to realize its agenda for a conservative coalition. Eagerly, they awaited the 1980 election, hoping to see the unease of the late-1970s return a conservative to the White House.

Entering the election of 1980, the economy was in a nose dive, inflation rates had skyrocketed, unemployment neared eight percent, and the nation had spent the year watching the hostage crisis in Tehran further deteriorate.⁶⁷ There to capitalize on the chaos was none other

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Bishop, *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America is Tearing Us Apart*, 125.

⁶⁷ Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 417-18.

than Ronald Reagan. Reagan, who in 1976 had nearly stolen the Republican nomination for the presidency from Ford, cruised to an easy victory in the primaries. In a vote of no confidence in the administration, Reagan handily defeated Carter. In discussing the significance of the election William H. Chafe explained:

Not only had Reagan won the presidency by a massive margin (Carter took only six states), but the Republican Party swept twelve Senate seats, defeating some of the best-known Democratic liberals in the country, and won thirty-three seats in the House of Representatives. By contrast, Nixon's landslide in 1972 had brought virtually no gains in either House ... In the eyes of some, the Reagan triumph symbolized a profound realignment of the American political landscape, representing a final and definitive shift to the right and institutionalized the new Republican majority.⁶⁸

As the Democratic Party moved further to the left on issues such as abortion, affirmative action, and the ERA debate, and increasingly away from economic issues, it lost the support of working class people. At the same time, the New Right wooed these workers to their cause by creating a narrative that presented liberals as launching an assault upon traditional American values and intuitions such as the nuclear family, religion, patriotism, and sexual morality. With the White House now in the hands of a conservative and building on the gains in 1980, the American Legislative Exchange Council continued its campaign to present conservative model policy to an increasing number of politicians on the right.

During the 1980s a major goal of ALEC's model policy was the proliferation of "New Federalism." Defined by authors Bernard L. Weinstein and Harold T. Gross in the ALEC publication, *Untying the Federal Knot: An Agenda for State and Local Independence*, New Federalism is, "A radical restructuring of fiscal and functional social services, except for Social Security and Medicare/Medicaid."⁶⁹ In essence, it was the rollback of the social welfare net built

⁶⁸ Ibid., 419.

⁶⁹ Bernard L. Weinstein and Harold T. Gross, *Untying the Federal Knot: An Agenda for State and Local Independence* (Washington, D.C.: American Legislative Exchange Council, 1986), 2.

by the New Deal and expanded upon by the Great Society. The authors conceded, however, “To date, Congress has refused to go along with most of the President’s initiatives. Nonetheless, a *de facto* ‘New Federalism,’ in the form of across-the-board cuts in federal aid, has emerged as a result of efforts to control spending and reduce budget deficits.”⁷⁰ Bernard L. Weinstein, an economist and member of ALEC’s Advisory Committee on tax policy, and economist Harold T. Gross wrote in opposition to general revenue sharing, a form of congressional appropriation of federal tax revenue to states, cities, counties and townships. According to the authors, “While the federal government faces record deficits the state and local governments are realizing substantial surpluses... Furthermore, state and local tax structure have been modified in recent years to compensate for perceived inadequacies at the time revenue sharing was enacted.”⁷¹ Weinstein and Gross instead argued for the ending of general revenue sharing in favor of states funding their own social programs—reducing the control of the federal bureaucracy while simultaneously strengthening state and local government’s power.⁷²

Also, key in the American Legislative Exchange Council’s campaign for New Federalism, was the implementation of urban enterprise zones. Urban enterprise zones are areas in which policies to encourage economic growth and development are implemented.⁷³ Originally a product of the Thatcher government in Britain, the legislation was exported to the United States during the Reagan administration. The 1980 *Source Book of American State Legislation* provided a model policy regarding urban enterprise zones, noting, “The Enterprise Zone Act is a major step toward reversing ineffective government policy with regard to urban decay. The Enterprise

⁷⁰ Weinstein and Harold T. Gross, *Untying the Federal Knot*, 2.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁷² Weinstein and Gross claimed that general revenue sharing was an outdated and inequitable distribution of funds. The authors advocated for removing general revenue sharing in favor of states allocating their own tax revenue as they wished, without federal oversight in how the money should be spent.

⁷³ These policies generally include tax concession, infrastructure incentives, and reduced regulations to attract investments and private companies into the zones.

Zone Act promotes the revitalization of the depressed areas by removing many governmental obstacles and disincentives to entrepreneurial activity.”⁷⁴

Reporting on the issue of urban enterprise zones in 1981, the *Christian Science Monitor* stated, “A plan now receiving the President's final review will soon be pushed in Congress. Meanwhile, several congressmen are shoving their way into the action by introducing their own bills. A big rush is on in many states, too, as seventy-six proposals are being dangled before state legislatures to create state and local enterprise zones.”⁷⁵ The article continued:

The administration plan is a revised version of the Kemp-Garcia urban jobs and enterprise zone bill presented to Congress in 1980. That bill was harshly criticized by community and civic groups for offering “too little” to the poor and jobless, by local public officials for seeking to impose federal standards without regard for local conditions, by small business entrepreneurs for “favoring” big business, and by labor unions for suggesting a waiver of minimum wages inside the zones.⁷⁶

Discussing ALEC’s role in the urban enterprise zone debate, the *Wall Street Journal* noted, “At last count, seventy-one enterprise zone bills have been introduced in state legislatures, says Edgar Vash of the American Legislative Exchange Council. Mr. Vash says states have a greater range of regulatory options. For that reason, their bills ‘tend to be more innovative, more comprehensive’ than the federal bills under consideration.”⁷⁷

In a follow-up to their 1981 article, the *Christian Science Monitor* examined the progression of urban enterprise zone legislation at the state level in Kentucky. The article noted:

State Rep. Edward L. Holloway boasts that his home state, Kentucky, recently adopted an ‘ideal’ enterprise zone law. Mr. Holloway, who co-sponsored an enterprise bill that passed the legislature March 16, says the measure encourages ‘private sector investment rather than government subsidy to improve the quality of life’ in depressed communities. His view is supported by Edgar Vash of the

⁷⁴ American Legislative Exchange Council, *The Source Book of American State Legislation: 1980* (Washington, D.C.: American Legislative Exchange Council, 1979), 8.

⁷⁵ Luix Overbea, “‘Enterprise Zones’: Latest Effort to Halt Urban Decay,” *Christian Science Monitor*, November 18, 1981.

⁷⁶ Overbea, “‘Enterprise Zones,’” *Christian Science Monitor*, November 18, 1981.

⁷⁷ Eugene Carlson, “Cities Try to Outpace Reagan by Forming ‘Enterprise Zones,’” *Wall Street Journal*, July 28, 1981.

American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), who has worked with sixteen states on enterprise zone legislation ... Kentucky, the seventh state to enact such a law, has 'one of the best passed or in process,' says Mr. Vash. 'It may not be a panacea, but it is a model other states could follow.'⁷⁸

In the 1982 mid-term elections, Democrats made some gains in the House of Representative, but failed to chip away at the Republican majority in the Senate, marking the first time since before the Great Depression that Republicans had defended a majority in either chamber of Congress. Notwithstanding, ALEC entered the 1984 election season optimistically and with a newly formed political action committee, ALEC-PAC, ready to continue the momentum of the Reagan Revolution.

Reporting on the election, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* wrote, "Having seized the ramparts through the election of Ronald Reagan, the dispatch of a platoon of allies to Congress, and control of 1984 Republican platform, the New Right is planning a concerted attack on the state legislatures and governorships."⁷⁹ The editorial continued, "The state level is where the movement has fallen 'way short,' says Richard Viguerie, New Right guru and direct-mail czar. He and others confirm that a constellation of New Right leaders have been meeting to plan a political campaign to elect more conservative state legislators and bring the New Right's agenda to the top of every legislature's calendar."⁸⁰ Discussing ALEC's role in the 1984 election cycle the *Inquirer* wrote:

To carry the fight to the enemy, the American Legislative Exchange Council (premier think-tank network of conservative state legislators since its formation eleven years ago) has just created its own political action committee. ALEC-PAC has targeted twenty-four state senate and sixty house races it calculates are "pivotal to conservative challenges to the liberal control" of nineteen legislative

⁷⁸ Overbea, "How Kentucky Created Urban 'Enterprise Zones,'" *Christian Science Monitor*, March 22, 1982.

⁷⁹ Neal Pirce, "On the March," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 1, 1984.

⁸⁰ Peirce, "On the March," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 1, 1984.

chambers in such states as Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Washington, Wisconsin and Delaware.⁸¹

It continued:

Nor does ALEC think it's into a short-term electoral foray. 'Ronald Reagan has changed the political dialogue for some time to come,' says ALEC-PAC director Michael Steinmetz. 'When we're talking about control of legislatures, we're looking to 1986 and 1988, to redistricting after the 1990 Census, and eventually to the turn of the century—to reapportionment in the year 2000.'⁸²

The American Legislative Exchange Council sought not only to win a Republican majority in November of 1984, but also demonstrated long-term strategy in election reapportionment moving forward.

Ronald Reagan won reelection in 1984 by an overwhelming landslide, receiving the electoral votes of forty-nine states, the lone exception being Minnesota, home of his opponent, Walter Mondale. Beyond the Republican success at the national level, ALEC's efforts in state legislatures were finally coming to the fruition. In the aftermath of the election the *New York Times* noted, "Republican candidates for state legislatures made strong gains around the country in Tuesday's voting. Including gains in the South that some political experts believe will prove to be permanent ... The more than three hundred state legislative seats that shifted into the Republican column continued the party's steady inroads on Democratic domination of the legislatures."⁸³ Explaining the significance of this victory nearing the reapportionment of representatives that would occur after the 1990 census, the editorial read:

Conservatives, accordingly, were jubilant with Tuesday's results. 'The bottom line that I'm predicting is that by the time reapportionment occurs on the basis of the 1990 census we will control more than half of the state legislative chambers in America,' said Michael Steinmetz of ALEC-PAC, the political action committee allied with the conservative American Legislative Exchange Council. 'And what that means,' he went on, 'is that the Republican Party will get control of the

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Iver Peterson, "Republicans Gain in State Legislatures," *New York Times*, November 11, 1984.

United States Congress because those state legislatures will be drawing the legislative district lines.’⁸⁴

In the wake of “morning in America,” ALEC looked to increase its hold upon state legislatures and by extension the United States Congress. In effect, its leaders had decided to change the rules of engagement to further their cause.

A 1985 editorial by the *Wall Street Journal*, “New Right Group Promotes Reagan Ideology in State Capitals from Boise to Baton Rouge” was devoted to outlining ALEC’s political and financial contributions to the 1984 election cycle. “[ALEC] claims as members some two thousand of the nation’s seventy-five hundred state legislators. And its political action committee which spend a modest 40,000 dollars in its initial outing in 1984, plans to plow 200,000 dollars into priority gubernatorial and state legislative races next year.”⁸⁵ The story continued, “Behind this activity is a determination to bring the same kind of tax limitations, budget cuts, and conservative social legislation to state legislatures that Ronald Reagan has already brought to Washington.” The article conceded, however:

Despite GOP gains of nearly three hundred seats in 1984, Democrats still hold fifty-eight percent of state legislative seats and control sixty-six of the ninety-eight state legislative chambers that operate on a partisan basis. The numbers dictate one ALEC objective: conservative control, either through an outright GOP majority or a coalition of Republicans and conservative Democrats, of at least one chamber in every state by 1990.⁸⁶

The *Wall Street Journal* also discussed ALEC’s support of several controversial policies including, tax revision and “privatization” of state functions. Also mentioned was ALEC’s opposition to economic disinvestment in South Africa in protest of the apartheid government of

⁸⁴ Peterson, “Republicans Gain in State Legislatures,” *New York Times*, November 11, 1984.

⁸⁵ Dennis Farney, “New Right Group Promotes Reagan Ideology in State Capitals from Boise to Baton Rouge,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 7, 1985.

⁸⁶ Farney, “New Right Group Promotes Reagan Ideology in State Capitals from Boise to Baton Rouge,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 7, 1985.

the time. According to the editorial, “ALEC also has fought a variety of state legislative proposals to force state pension funds to divest themselves of securities of concerns doing business in South Africa. ‘What is at stake here is a company’s right to invest anywhere it wants to invest,’ argued then-executive director Kathy Teague in an interview earlier this year.”⁸⁷

Concurrently ALEC was producing literature for its constituents regarding the newly emerging political force of the gay community during the 1980s. At the time, however, this information was kept from the public’s eye and distributed solely to members of ALEC, only recently being uncovered. The literature, entitled, “Homosexuals: Just Another Minority Group?” amounts to little more than propaganda. A section devoted to “the homosexual lifestyle” stated that institutions such as gay bars, clubs, and other community gathering places are “probably some of the most destructive and degrading institutions in America today.”⁸⁸ A section titled “Pedophilia” made the visceral and unsubstantiated claim, “Whatever the type of homosexual, one of the more dominant practices with the homosexual world is pedophilia, the fetish for young children.”⁸⁹ Recent revelations such as these shed light on some of ALEC’s malevolent causes throughout the 1980s.

The 1986 election season proved to be a minor setback for the American Legislative Exchange Council on the national level. As is common in mid-term elections, the Republicans lost several of the seats they had gained throughout the 1980s. In the Senate, this amounted to Democrats gaining eight seats, recapturing the majority for the first time since the Reagan Revolution of 1980. The Democrats were also successful in maintaining their majority in the

⁸⁷ Farney, “New Right Group Promotes Reagan Ideology in State Capitals from Boise to Baton Rouge,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 7, 1985.

⁸⁸ American Legislative Exchange Council, “Homosexuals: Just Another Minority Group?” (Washington, D.C.: American Legislative Exchange Council, n.d.), accessed February 19, 2018, http://files.pfaw.org/pfaw_files/ALECminoritygroup.pdf.

⁸⁹ American Legislative Exchange Council, “Homosexuals: Just Another Minority Group?”

House. Likewise, the gains in the state legislatures of 1984 were also rolled back. According to a *New York Times* article, “Democrats scored modest gains in state legislatures around the country in the elections Tuesday, basically regaining the ground the party lost in the Reagan landslide two years ago ... Both parties viewed the legislative races as battles for long-term, grassroots strength nationally, and they put more money and effort into those races this years than ever before.”⁹⁰ Despite their losses, Republicans were already looking ahead to the general election. As noted by the editorial, “For their part, Republican spokesmen said the party had done as well as could be expected in a midterm election and was poised to gain heavily in 1988 on the coattails of a strong presidential candidate.”⁹¹ A Republican gain in eight governorships was the lone victory for conservatives in the twilight of the Reagan administration.

When the American Legislative Exchange Council was first organized in 1973, few could have imagined the impact it would have on state legislation. Understanding the hurdles facing lawmakers drafting legislation at the state level, the think tank offered its assistance as a remedy. The model policy the American Legislative Exchange Council drafted in conjunction with its corporate donors and members, often came as a relief to these overwhelmed part-time politicians. However, these model bills were not always crafted with the livelihoods of their constituents in mind, but rather with the intent to benefit their corporate backers. From its inception during the second Nixon term through the presidency of Ronald Reagan, the organization played an active role in spreading conservative policy at the state level. The Council’s publications demonstrated the organization’s commitment to reducing the strength of the federal government, empowering states to take a more active role in the legislative process.

⁹⁰ David E. Rosenbaum, “Democrats Gain Ground in Legislatures of States,” *New York Times*, November 8, 1986.

⁹¹ Rosenbaum, “Democrats Gain Ground in Legislatures of States,” *New York Times*, November 8, 1986.

With the help of ALEC, conservatives not only captured the nation's highest office during the late 1970s and 1980s, but also planted the seeds of an ideological movement in all fifty of the state legislatures around the country.

Chapter 3—The Heritage Foundation

In October 2013, Americans across the country watched in shock and awe as the gears of the United States government ground to a halt over a federal shutdown. The shutdown was brought about by a contentious debate over funding appropriation for the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, often referred to as Obamacare. On one side of the aisle stood the President, Barack Obama, and the Senate, on the other the House of Representatives. Discussing the phenomenon, a *Time Magazine* article published the day before the impending shutdown quipped, “Republicans and Democrats in Congress are trading blame ahead of Tuesday’s government shutdown, but there’s another culprit in D.C.’s latest dysfunction whose offices are not to be found in the gilded suites of the Capitol, but in a drab, fluorescent-lit office five blocks away.”⁹² It’s author, Zeke J. Miller, continued, “There, a team of organizers, lobbyists and twenty-something social media specialists are harnessing the power of the Tea Party to drive a wrench into Congress’s gears. Heritage Action for America, the political arm of the once esteemed Heritage Foundation, has been working day and night for years to bring about just the crisis now gripping D.C.”⁹³

According to the piece, Heritage launched a nine-city bus tour and recruited conservative icon, Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, to head the charge.⁹⁴ Despite conservative efforts, the Republican leadership admitted defeat in their fight to defund Obamacare, unwilling to endure the onslaught of public disapproval over the debacle. Indeed, in recent years the Heritage Foundation, a nearly fifty-year-old organization, has not enjoyed the same influence it held in

⁹² Zeke J. Miller, “Hidden Hand: How Heritage Action Drove D.C. to Shut Down,” *Time*, September 30, 2013, accessed September 17, 2017, <http://swampland.time.com/2013/09/30/hidden-hand-how-heritage-action-drove-dc-to-shut-down/>.

⁹³ Miller, “Hidden Hand: How Heritage Action Drove D.C. to Shut Down,” *Time*, September 30, 2013.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

Washington during the golden years of the Reagan administration. Despite this, prospects for Heritage's future remain bright after playing a pivotal role in assembling the Trump administration's transitional team.⁹⁵

The Heritage Foundation is considered by many to be the premier conservative think tank in Washington. In their own words, "The mission of The Heritage Foundation is to formulate and promote conservative public policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense."⁹⁶ They continue, "Heritage's staff pursues this mission by performing timely, accurate research on key policy issues and effectively marketing these findings to our primary audiences: members of Congress, key congressional staff members, policymakers in the executive branch, the nation's news media, and the academic and policy communities."⁹⁷ Through their research and publications Heritage has played a crucial role in shaping the American political landscape.

While the American Legislative Exchange Council led the movement to turn state policy toward conservatism, the Heritage Foundation, another conservative think tank owing its existence to Paul Weyrich, focused on policy at the national level. The group began in 1970 as the Analysis and Research Association (ARA). Founded by Weyrich and congressional staffer Edwin J. Feulner Jr., the group initially lacked direction and funding.⁹⁸ Weyrich and Feulner were inspired by the Brookings Institution, an influential research group and think tank, that promoted liberal-oriented legislation. Discussing the dominance of liberal ideas in Washington

⁹⁵ Katie Glueck, "Trump's Shadow Transition Team," *Politico*, November 22, 2016, accessed September 17, 2017, <http://www.politico.com/story/2016/11/trump-transition-heritage-foundation-231722>.

⁹⁶ Heritage Foundation, "About Heritage," accessed October 2, 2017, <http://www.heritage.org/about-heritage/mission>.

⁹⁷ Heritage Foundation, "About Heritage."

⁹⁸ Feulner worked as the administrative assistant to Illinois Congressman Phillip Crane, a Republican member of the United States House of Representatives from 1969 to 2005.

during the postwar period in his authorized history of the Heritage Foundation, historian Lee Edwards notes:

Envious conservatives watched the powerful liberal coalition of academics, think tank analysts, members of Congress, White House aides, interest group officials, and journalists run much of the business of the nation's capital and wondered: "Why can't we put together an operation like that?" And wondered some more. Yet the answer was clear: there was no conservative alternative to the Brookings Institution, the catalyst for many of legislative success of the liberals during the 1960s and early 1970s.⁹⁹

Following a close Senate vote in the spring on 1971 over federal funding for the Supersonic Transport Project, in which government funding was cut due to environmental concerns, Weyrich and Feulner intensified their efforts to create an organization dedicated to preparing prompt and concise conservative-oriented public policy research.¹⁰⁰ Weyrich courted Jack Wilson, assistant for political affairs to Joseph Coors, seeking financial backing for the organization from the brewery magnate and avowed conservative. Coors, like many business community members had read the influential Powell Memorandum and had been in search of a conservative political organization to invest in.¹⁰¹

After winning over Wilson and eventually meeting with Coors himself, Weyrich and Feulner secured the support of the wealthy businessman. Coors's initial investment of 250,000 dollars in 1971 got the operation off the ground, and in the years afterwards he continued to contribute 300,000 dollars annually.¹⁰² Coors's money ensured the survival of the fledgling

⁹⁹ Lee Edwards, *The Power of Ideas: The Heritage Foundation at 25 Years* (Ottawa, IL: Jamerson Books, 1997), 2.

¹⁰⁰ The loss of federal funding and eventual ban on the program were seen as an attack on American business by a liberal Congress. Beyond environmental concerns, those opposed to the program also pointed to the lack of a market for such a transportation service, as only the wealthiest Americans would be able to afford travel by such means.

¹⁰¹ Edwards, *The Power of Ideas*, 8-9.

¹⁰² Harold Jackson, "Joseph Coors: The Man Who Bought the White House for Ronald Reagan," *The Guardian*, March 18, 2003, accessed September 19, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2003/mar/19/guardianobituaries.usa>.

organization, although the ARA failed to secure the financial support of other backers. By 1972 the relationship between its leadership was already deteriorating. Seeking a new vehicle for their agenda Weyrich, Feulner, Wilson, and Coors took over the dormant tax-exempt Robert M. Schuchman Memorial Foundation, an organization named after the late Schuchman, a leading member of Young Americans for Freedom and the group's first president. However, their efforts to turn the Schuchman Foundation into the effective public policy agency they desired had not paid off. According to Edwards, "Members of the old board preferred a more traditional approach to public policy, relying on conferences and the publication of papers. The new members, led by Weyrich and Feulner, wanted to affect the legislative process promptly and directly."¹⁰³ Eventually it was decided that the Schuchman Foundation was to become a public-interest law center, and a separate organization would be created to serve as public-policy foundation. On February 16, 1973 this organization was incorporated as the Heritage Foundation and Weyrich assumed the presidency of the organization.¹⁰⁴

After an intense board meeting in November 1973, the split between Schuchman and Heritage became official, with Weyrich, Wilson, and Coors leaving its board of directors to devote their full-time to Heritage while Feulner remained with the Schuchman Foundation, serving as its president. Shortly afterward, Weyrich received the letter from the IRS that confirmed, effective November 27, 1973, Heritage was a tax-deductible organization.¹⁰⁵ With the official departure from Schuchman, Weyrich and his compatriots were finally ready to move forward with their agenda to affect policy in a new a dramatic way.

¹⁰³ Edwards, *The Power of Ideas*, 10.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 10-11; The Heritage Foundation, Action Taken at the Organizational Meeting, n.d., Box 5, Folder 1, Paul M. Weyrich Scrapbooks, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹⁰⁵ United States Department of the Treasury, November 27, 1973, Box 5, Folder 1, Paul M. Weyrich Scrapbooks, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

However, just as these hardline conservatives began to see the fruits of their labors come to bear, the nation was struck with the shock of the Watergate scandal. Conservatives reeled at the disgrace, and pundits claimed the days of the Republican Party were numbered. Weyrich, never one to lay down and accept defeat, leapt into action. Edwards states, “Even before President Nixon resigned in August 1974 rather than face certain impeachment, Weyrich had concluded the fall elections could well be a disaster for the Republican Party. Guided as usual by his activist impulses, Weyrich resigned as President of Heritage in March and started the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress.”¹⁰⁶ A measure undoubtedly spurred on by Weyrich’s desire to have an increasingly direct hand in the fall Congressional elections.

In his stead, veteran Washington staffer Jerry Preston James took over as president of Heritage. James’s tenure as president was short-lived, leaving the next year. However, during his stint as the head of Heritage, he wrote profusely for the organization. In a 1974 Heritage publication, entitled, *Federal Spending and Budget Control: An Analysis and Review*, James promoted legislation to control the increasing trend of federal spending. Discussing the cause of rising federal spending, James claimed, “It does not take great wisdom to ascertain that federal sending has increased primarily because the Government has been engaged in providing more and more programs and services.”¹⁰⁷ James argued that spending on these federal programs rather than the country’s large defense budget was the key issue in understanding the increasing tax burden and rising inflation that Americans were beginning to experience in the early 1970s.¹⁰⁸ James also discussed and critiqued the methods the federal government was exploring to combat the growth of federal spending including, tax reform, wage and price controls, revenue

¹⁰⁶ Edwards, *The Power of Ideas*, 12.

¹⁰⁷ Jerry P. James, *Federal Spending and Budget Control: An Analysis and Review* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1974), 13.

¹⁰⁸ James, *Federal Spending and Budget Control*, 18-19.

sharing, program reform, and executive spending ceilings and impoundment, noting that none of these measure independently or collectively had helped to meet the issue of budget control.¹⁰⁹

Instead he endorsed a combination of pending legislation put forth by Congressional Joint Study Committee on Budget Control, coupled with a proposal made by notable conservative politicians including Carl T. Curtis, that would create new budget committees in both the House and Senate to determine spending ceilings for the fiscal year—returning some of the powers of the purse to Congress and away from the president. In closing James stated, “Congress has failed to control spending in a responsible way because structurally it has lacked the ability to do so, and politically it has lacked the will to do so.”¹¹⁰ He continued, “Legislation can restore Congress’s ability to deal effectively and efficiently with budget matters, but only by making balanced budgets mandatory and self-implementing can the will to deal responsibly with budget matters be restored and insulated from inordinate political pressures.”¹¹¹ James’s writing indicates Heritage’s early goal of reducing the federal deficit by establishing Congressional committees to limit federal spending on social welfare programs, while simultaneously reducing the power of the executive branch in setting the federal budget.

Likewise, a study titled *Death & Taxes* by Heritage economist, Hans F. Sennholz, examined the history of taxes, estate taxes, and the American government’s attempts to use its powers of taxation to end wealth inequality through social programs. In the 1976 monograph, Sennholz claimed the piece’s intent was to show, “The desired objective of economic equality lies beyond the power of any government to achieve, and that tax levies designed to equalize income and wealth are not only ineffective, but also harmful to peace and order.”¹¹² Sennholz

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 40.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 63.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Hans F. Sennholz, *Death & Taxes* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1976), 8-9.

discussed the history of estate taxes dating back to their inception 1797. These estates taxes were often enacted in times of war to raise revenue, and regularly repealed shortly afterward. This practice changed in 1916 during World War I. According to Sennholz, “What began as an emergency levy, imposed briefly and proportionately, has evolved as a permanent instrument of economic and social policy. In the following years it was to be applied with even greater severity.”¹¹³ Sennholz argued that while estate taxes did not physically destroy capital equipment, they forced heirs to forfeit finances that would create more capital gains, hurting Americans across the class spectrum.¹¹⁴ Sennholz’s argument that it would be more economically beneficial to all Americans if the richest received a tax break is indicative of the organizations neoliberal business tendencies even before trickle-down economics became popular opinion.

In 1975, with Jerry P. James stepping down as the head of Heritage, a search committee selected Frank J. Walton, the former secretary of business and transportation for California governor, Ronald Reagan, to serve as the organization’s president. The Reagan connection helped to give the foundation some notoriety in Washington. Walton, a successful California businessman before joining Reagan’s gubernatorial cabinet, also brought with him key financial connections—foundations and corporate executives. His efforts more than doubled Heritage’s income from some 400,000 dollars in 1974 to over one million dollars by the end of his presidency in 1976. Coupled with the larger financial donations, was a direct-mail campaign garnering several thousand smaller contributions.¹¹⁵ In subsequent years, Heritage received contributions and support from Bechtel Corporation, Dart Industries, Dow Chemical, and the

¹¹³ Sennholz, *Death & Taxes*, 26.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 41-43.

¹¹⁵ Edwards, *The Power of Ideas*, 14.

Scaife family, who donated 900,000 dollars that supplemented the initial Coors's investment—in the years that have followed, the Scaife Foundation has donated over twenty-three million dollars to Heritage.¹¹⁶

The next several years proved to be a trying time for Heritage as the organization struggled to find its place in Washington. The foundation underwent several changes in leadership until 1977, when Edwin J. Feulner, Jr. was offered the position. When Feulner took over Heritage in 1977 the organization was far from the monumental player in Washington politics that it became in the future.¹¹⁷ Feulner made a crucial personnel appointment to Heritage that would help to make it the effective and influential conservative voice its founders had hoped to create. Discussing this appointment, Edwards wrote, “Phillip N. Truluck, a longtime associate at the Republican Study Committee, was named director of research. Truluck’s assignment was to build a new kind of research department that did not then exist in Washington.”¹¹⁸ He continued, “It would take complicated public-policy questions and translate them into concise, credible research papers that could be quickly read by policymakers in Congress and the executive branch. While almost all think tanks use such a format for policy analysis, Heritage, under Truluck’s guidance, was the first to do so.”¹¹⁹ Thus, the famous Heritage “briefcase test” was born. Heritage’s briefcase test ensured that the policy it produced was succinct, direct, and small enough to fit in a politician’s briefcase to be read at his leisure—a stark contrast to the

¹¹⁶ Richard Krooth “Politics American Style,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 16, no. 1/2 (January 3-8, 1981): 20-21, accessed February 18, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4369404>; Frederick S. Lane, *The Decency Wars: The Campaign to Cleanse American Culture* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2006), 103.

¹¹⁷ Heritage Foundation, “Statement from the Chairman of Heritage’s Board of Trustees,” May 2, 2017, accessed September 7, 2017, <http://www.heritage.org/article/statement-the-chairman-heritages-board-trustees>. Feulner served as President of the Heritage Foundation from 1977 until he stepped down in 2013. He was replaced by former U.S. Senator Jim DeMint. In the spring of 2017 DeMint was asked to step down by the Heritage Foundation’s Board of Trustees. In his stead, the Board of Trustees appointed Edwin Feulner as the interim president and CEO until a replacement can be found.

¹¹⁸ Edwards, *The Power of Ideas*, 24.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

dense academic tomes produced by other policy centers that more often than not failed to be incorporated into legislation.

According to professor of political science and American studies at Hebrew University, David M. Ricci, “These essays, thoroughly researched and fully footnoted, were usually written in six to eight weeks but could be produced if necessary in days.”¹²⁰ He continued:

Heritage first did scores and then hundreds of them every year, each dealing with a current issue such as trade negotiations, the hostages in Tehran, gun control legislation, or pipeline regulations ... each was delivered free, quickly and personally to government officials, to journalists who might publicize Heritage’s proposals, and to congressional and White House staffers who might use Heritage materials to brief their bosses.¹²¹

As noted by Donald Abelson, professor of political science at The University of Western Ontario, “For [Edward] Feulner ... think tanks, like corporations, must properly market their products in order to capture the attention of their key target audiences, a guiding principle enshrined in the organization.”¹²² He continued on, quoting Feulner:

There’s an old saying in business: ‘Nothing happens until somebody sells something.’ In the ideas industry, nobody sells like the Heritage Foundation. [Since 1974], we’ve marketed conservative policy solutions to those who make or shape national policy. Of course, dozens of Washington-based think tanks—and hundreds of special interest groups do the same. What sets heritage apart is our ‘sales departments’ [Government Relations, Communications and Marketing, and External Relations], which are the best in the business.¹²³

The new format secured Heritage a niche in the evolving conservative movement of the late 1970s. Describing Feulner’s leadership glowingly, Edwards concluded that, “Under Ed Feulner, an increasingly confident Heritage Foundation set an ambitious goal: to establish itself as a

¹²⁰ David M. Ricci, *The Transformation of American Politics: The New Washington and the Rise of Think Tanks* (Binghamton, NY: Vail-Ballou Press, 1993), 161.

¹²¹ Ricci, *The Transformation of American Politics*, 161-62.

¹²² Donald E. Abelson, *A Capitol Idea: Think Tanks and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 84.

¹²³ Abelson, *A Capitol Idea*, 84-85.

significant force in the policymaking process and to help build a new conservative coalition that would replace the New Deal coalition which had dominated American politics and policy for half a century.”¹²⁴ Speaking to what set the Heritage Foundation apart from other think tanks. James Rosenthal of *The New Republic* wrote in 1985, “Heritage is a different creature—and that is the reason for its success ... Heritage’s innovation is to combine the structures of a research group, a public relations firm, a special interest lobby, and an employment agency into one organization.”¹²⁵ Rosenthal attributed much of Heritage’s success not to the intellectual merit of its work, but instead noted, “Heritage simply packages and presents its ideas far more skillfully than any other Washington think tank.”¹²⁶

One of these Heritage studies, *Indexing the Inflationary Impact of Taxes: The Necessary Economic Reform* (1978), by Donald J. Senese, a senior research associate with the Republican Study Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, argued in favor of tax reform to combat the increasing effects of inflation on American consumers. As wages increased to meet the rising costs of goods, more and more Americans were propelled into higher tax brackets, losing a larger share of their income to taxes, in effect bringing home a higher income without experiencing greater purchasing power. Senese explained, “The taxpayer experiences the effects of an increased cost of living and a disproportionate increase in taxes as part of this increasing cost. Considering this major effect of inflation, a larger proportion of the national income has been switched from the private to the public sector through increased government revenues from tax collections.”¹²⁷ In effect, Senese claimed that while the taxpayer suffers under the brunt of

¹²⁴ Ibid., 32.

¹²⁵ James Rosenthal, “The Second-Generation Think Tank: Heritage Hype,” *The New Republic*, September 2, 1985, 15.

¹²⁶ Rosenthal, “The Second-Generation Think Tank.”

¹²⁷ Donald J. Senese, *Indexing the Inflationary Impact of Taxes: The Necessary Economic Reform* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1978), 6.

inflation, the federal government reaps the rewards. In just over fifty pages Senese laid out the argument for tax indexing to remedy the burden of inflation on taxpayers. Tax indexing is a process of tying taxes, wages or other rates to an index to protect the consumers' purchasing power by altering tax rates to prevent bracket creep. Thus, Senese's writing serves as an example of Heritage's early commitment both to the conservative cause of cutting taxes, and to the larger goal of curtailing federal spending by decreasing government revenue from taxes.

Another Heritage publication, *Balancing the Budget: Should the Constitution be Amended?*, edited in 1979 by Truluck himself, addressed the national debate raging over the federal deficit. The study encompassed a collection of speeches from a seminar held by Heritage in April 1979 to address the questions of a balanced budget, spending limitations, and the need for a constitutional convention. Alan Meltzer, professor of economics at Carnegie-Mellon University, suggested a constitutional amendment which stated, "The total government outlays in any fiscal year shall not exceed the spending limit. The spending limit is equal to the average of total budget receipts in the three most recent fiscal years."¹²⁸ Meltzer believed such a proposed halt in the increase of federal expenditures would slow the deficit's growth and reduce the rate of tax growth to compensate for it.

The Heritage Foundation's new direction occurred at an opportune time. As the Carter administration faltered in the face of a national energy crisis and rising inflation, the Foundation worked diligently to produce studies that opposed Carter's proposed Department of Energy, instead advocating to deregulate oil prices and Environmental Protection Agency laws regarding oil exploration in the United States.¹²⁹ In a 1978 policy study entitled, "*Closing the Nuclear*

¹²⁸ Phillip N. Truluck, ed., *Balancing the Budget: Should the Constitution be Amended?* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1979), 10.

¹²⁹ Edwards, *The Power of Ideas*, 30-31.

Option: Scenarios for Societal Change, Heritage policy analyst, Milton R. Copulos, addressed the impending energy crisis and national concerns regarding nuclear and coal powered plants. In his brief analysis, Copulos determined that if there was a moratorium on either coal or nuclear power, American society would suffer drastically, with the economy tumbling down as millions of workers would be without jobs. In his closing remarks he called for the standards under the Clean Air Act to be, “revised in a realistic fashion so that both the economy and the environment can be protected.”¹³⁰ He closed claiming, “The National Environmental Policy Act should be reviewed to determine whether some of its provisions are not in fact running counter to their intended purpose. Legitimate public involvement was the intent of the act, not dilatory tactics on the part of a small group of individuals. There are serious questions as to whether the actions of intervenors really represent the public interest.”¹³¹ Heritage’s efforts to deal with the energy crisis in the end were an attempt to rollback regulation of business, placing its faith in a “free market” solution to the problem.

Coupled with the economic crises the United States faced in the late 1970s was a deteriorating relationship with the Soviet Union. Although the beginning of the decade had been filled with talks of détente and a gradual willingness to cooperate with the communist regime, the decade’s end saw the Cold War heat back up. Heritage, in particular, began to examine the realm of foreign policy, hoping to aid in the crusade against communism. Discussing Heritage’s early interest in international affairs, Edwards explains, “The foundation’s studies on foreign policy and national security issues during the Carter years included analyses of the flaws of the SALT II treaty; basing options for the MX missile; the importance of the neutron bomb to

¹³⁰ Milton R. Copulos, *Closing the Nuclear Option: Scenarios for Societal Change* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1978), 30.

¹³¹ Copulos, *Closing the Nuclear Option*.

America's defense arsenal; and Senate abrogation of the defense treaty between the United States and the Republic of China on Taiwan."¹³² Indeed, Heritage capitalized on the administration's perceived failures in the face of the communist threat to cast doubt on President Jimmy Carter and his party.

The 1970s were a difficult time in American history. The nation faced economic hardships, as the manufacturing economy that had propelled the country to its global power status gradually moved from America's heartland and into the second and third world, in search of cheaper production costs and higher profits. Likewise, an increasingly global economy sputtered in the face of OPEC's oil embargo in 1973 and the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which saw American diplomats and citizens captured by revolutionaries and interruptions in the exports of petroleum, adding to concerns about international security and fueling the fires of the energy crisis. Western nations watched in frustration as the Soviets invaded Afghanistan that same year, signaling the possible spread of communist influence into the already tumultuous region of the Middle East. At decade's end the Carter administration seemed to have little to be proud of as the United States appeared to face disaster both at home and in the world abroad. Conservatives, tapping into the general unease, looked to channel this disdain into a political revolution that saw the election of the most conservative candidate to head the republican ticket since Barry Goldwater in 1964. Thus, on the eve of the election cycle of 1980, Heritage stood poised to make a significant impact upon the new Reagan administration.

In preparation for the possible election of a conservative presidential candidate the Heritage Foundation undertook its most ambitious project to date, a wide-ranging collection of

¹³² Edwards, *The Power of Ideas*, 36.

policy study researched and written by twenty project teams and over three hundred contributors.

Bernard Weinraub of the New York Times reported prior to the study's publication

The foundation rather took matters into its own hands last year when its trustees decided that the organization should devise proposals for a possible conservative government in 1980. Among the trustees are William E. Simon, former Secretary of the Treasury; Shelby Cullom Davis, former ambassador to Switzerland; Jack Eckerd, former head of the General Services Administration, and Mr. [Joseph] Coors, the Colorado brewer who is a prominent donor to conservative causes.¹³³

Weinraub continued, “‘We knew that when the Nixon administration took over, so much time was spent learning who was who and what was going on that it was months before anyone could look at policy matters,’ said Herb Berkowitz, the foundation’s public relations director. ‘So the trustees decided, why don’t we come up with policy initiatives on our own?’”¹³⁴ The massive tome, numbering over one thousand pages, was distributed to the Reagan transition team and member of the press prior to its 1980 publication for the general public. The publication, christened, *Mandate for Leadership: Policy Management in a Conservative Administration*, served as Heritage’s chief source of guidance for the president-elect. The work opened, claiming, “‘The recommendations in this volume are not presented as cure-alls for the nation’s problems, nor as a comprehensive catalogue of every policy concept in the conservative storehouse of ideas...What is provided by the authors is a series of proposals which, if implemented, will help revitalize our economy, strengthen our national security, and halt the centralization of power in the federal government.’”¹³⁵ In the pages that followed, Heritage laid out plans for a thorough overhaul of the federal government.

¹³³ Bernard Weinraub, “Conservatives Aid Transition Plans Behind the Scenes,” *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, December 5, 1980, accessed February 18, 2018, <https://search-proquest-com.www.libproxy.wvu.edu/docview/121422340?accountid=2837>.

¹³⁴ Weinraub, “Conservatives Aid Transition Plans Behind the Scenes.”

¹³⁵ Charles L. Heatherly, ed., *Mandate for Leadership: Policy Management in a Conservative Administration* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1981), vii.

Part I of *Mandate for Leadership* is devoted to the cabinet departments. In the chapter discussing the Department of Agriculture, its author, Don Paarlberg, a former assistant secretary of the Department of Agriculture, argued for cuts to the food stamp program, noting, “In computing income as to determine eligibility, only money income is counted. Omitted are all forms of welfare payments, subsidies, public housing and income in kind. Taking account of these sources of income would eliminate the better-off participants, increase the incentive to find employment, and cut the cost by six hundred million dollars.”¹³⁶ He continued, “Additionally the overlap between the school lunch program and the food stamp program could be eliminated.”¹³⁷ Here, Paarlberg illustrated Heritage’s goal to limit federal spending by peeling back the social welfare net created by government programs. In the chapter devoted to the Department of Commerce, senior economist of the Joint Economic Committee, Charles H. Bradford, argued in favor of regulatory reform, claiming:

The clock should not be turned back on the good that has come from social and environmental regulation, but it is time we recognize these regulations are not costless. Heretofore, we have charged forward with tunnel vision, seeking to correct flaws in our environment and seeking to improve our quality of life, but without thought for the costs that these regulations impose on business, on productivity and on inflation.¹³⁸

Bradford’s words demonstrated a conscious effort to remove or reduce environmental regulations, rollbacks that would benefit business’s production and income.

Extensive attention is given to tax cuts in the chapter covering the Department of the Treasury. Author Norman B. Ture, president of the Institute for Research on the Economics of Taxation, stated, “Over the past forty years, tax policy has been aimed at two targets: the

¹³⁶ Heatherly, *Mandate for Leadership*, 27.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 86-87.

management of aggregate demand and the leveling of disparities in the distribution of income and wealth.”¹³⁹ He continued:

Now emerging and rapidly gaining prominence, as a result of the application of classical or “supply-side” economics to economic policy, is an alternative target for tax policy: encouraging aggregate supply by reducing the excessive tax rates which now fall most heavily on leisure and consumption. Tax policy should make the tax system more nearly neutral by reducing the tax biases and disincentives which have increased the relative benefits of leisure and consumption and raised the relative costs of work effort, saving and investing.¹⁴⁰

In moving toward a more neutral tax code, Ture recommended, across-the-board personal income tax rate reductions, personal saving incentives such as the reduction of the rate of tax on savings incomes, and business tax reform such as the elimination of corporate tax rates.¹⁴¹ Ture’s application of supply-side economics is indicative of the “trickle down” economics famous during the Reagan administration.

While Part I of *Mandate* featured the work of fourteen writers, their conclusions were largely the same, the departments of the cabinet must have their budgets reduced and their oversight downsized, while social programs should be consolidated or cut altogether. The key exception to these cuts was the Department of Defense, where Tidal W. McCoy and Sven Kraemer, two national security policy researchers, recommended an increase in thirty-five billion dollars per year to the federal defense budget in the next six years, in order to reestablish American military superiority in the world.¹⁴²

Part II of *Mandate* examined independent regulatory agencies, most notably the Consumer Product Safety Commission. In the section detailing the Consumer Product Safety Commission, Loc T. Nguyen, a research associate with the House Republican Study Committee,

¹³⁹ Ibid., 649.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 655-62.

¹⁴² Ibid., 152-54.

questioned the legitimacy of such an organization.¹⁴³ Ngyugen wrote about the adverse effects of regulation by the Consumer Product Safety Commission, evident in the textile industry's price hike of children's sleepwear after flammable fabric standards were adopted. As standards increased the price of manufacturing, companies began to shift away from the production of children's sleepwear in favor of more profitable textile goods not subject to such regulation.¹⁴⁴ In her recommendations to the incoming administration, she concluded, "The agency could be abolished entirely by legislation. Although there is some indication of a decline in injuries associated with toys, solid evidence of a more general reduction in injuries is difficult to find. The fact is that the agency has expended a great deal of money with little to show for it in the way of tangible results."¹⁴⁵ She conceded, however, "As to abolishment of the commission, legislation would be needed to strip the CPSC of its standards-making and enforcement authority. Since this could prove politically unfeasible, the administration might better be advised to continue the agency but with drastic cutbacks to funding, permitting the CPSC to operate only as an educational and informational agency."¹⁴⁶ Here Ngyugen again proposed legislation that would rollback business regulation, and in theory increase profit margins. Heritage's policy would eliminate an agency conceived to empower consumers in favor of corporate gains.

Part III of *Mandate* looked at other independent government agencies, with the Environmental Protection Agency being the chief focus of business interests. Lewis J. Cordia, environmental policy analyst for the Heritage Foundation, conceded that while the agency's

¹⁴³ The establishment of such an agency was first discussed under the Johnson administration by the National Commission of Product safety, established in 1968. Although the Nixon administration opposed the creation of the agency, Congress passed the Consumer Product Safety Act of 1972, creating the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

¹⁴⁴ Heatherly, *Mandate for Leadership*, 729-30.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 731.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 731-32.

existence was unquestionable, an overhaul was necessary. Cordia recommended amendments to both the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act, which were both under consideration for reauthorization in 1981. These proposed amendments would loosen regulations to allow business to operate more freely.¹⁴⁷ Similarly he suggested rollbacks in regulation regarding solid waste, pesticides, and other toxic substances.

The epilogue, penned by lawyer Danny J. Boggs, dealt with the powers of executive orders. He noted, “One of the major powers which a president can exercise immediately upon assuming office, without the necessity for Congressional action, is the power to issue, amend or revoke executive orders and proclamations.”¹⁴⁸ He continued:

Most executive orders involve internal organization, and division of responsibility or delegation of responsibility originally assigned to the President. These are frequently important, but are not crucial to address in the first few days. On the other hand, there are a number of government-wide programs that rest primarily on the authority of Executive Orders, such as much of the “affirmative action” program, wage-price guidelines, international environmental enforcement and paperwork reduction, to name only a few.¹⁴⁹

In the realm of affirmative action, Boggs claimed:

In many areas, government programs of affirmative action, instituted by executive order, have gone far beyond elimination of any actual discrimination into using statistical methods and quotas to regulate every aspect of private and departmental life ... The Justice Task Force [of Heritage] discussed the current excesses of affirmative action and indicated a series of actions that could be taken to control them, if a policy decision were made to the resulting heat.¹⁵⁰

In line with the recommendations of the Justice Task Force, he contended that the new administration should abolish all references to “affirmative action” or statistical reporting in all executive orders. He acknowledged the political difficulty of such an act though, and instead

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 973-990.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 1077.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 1083.

called for further examination of the excesses of affirmative action, in conjunction with the symbolic gesture of the government ceasing to racially classify its own employees, which he claimed was “racist and demeaning” by pigeonholing employees into ethnic categories.¹⁵¹ This “color-blind” approach to race was adopted by conservatives, both to skirt around a dialogue of overt racism, and to use affirmative action against the Democratic Party by portraying it as the race and quota party, a sore spot to many of their white working class voters affected by affirmative action legislation. In closing Boggs presented the incoming administration with a plethora of options to explore in the realm of executive power.

When Heritage first began drafting *Mandate for Leadership*, it was unclear how receptive the incoming administration would be to its policy advice. Hedging their bets that the floundering Carter administration would be on its way out of Washington, the Heritage Foundation leadership charged forward with the development of a blueprint for a more conservative government. As noted by Heritage historian, Lee Edwards, the total cost to produce *Mandate for Leadership* had numbered near a quarter of a million dollars.¹⁵² When Ronald Reagan secured the nomination as the Republican candidate and later soared to victory over Jimmy Carter, Heritage’s expensive endeavor paid off. A *Christian Science Monitor* editorial, covering the growing power of think tanks in American politics reported:

How sweet success is. Edwin J. Feulner Jr. stretches back in his chair, his arm folded behind his head and a grin on his face, and confesses, “I love it.” As president of the conservative Heritage Foundation, Mr. Feulner is riding the wave that swept President Reagan into office. His foundation is one of a burgeoning network of think tanks, research centers that have suddenly found themselves near the center of power.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Edwards, *The Power of Ideas*, 44.

¹⁵³ Julia Malone, “Right's New Weapon—Think Tanks,” *Christian Science Monitor*, February 10, 1981, accessed November 18, 2017, <https://search-proquest-com.www.libproxy.wvu.edu/docview/1038970157?accountid=2837>.

The piece continued:

They are providing studies, position papers, and, in some cases, personnel to reshape America in a more conservative mold—slashing government spending, cutting regulation, and rebuilding the military ... For years it seemed that the liberals had a monopoly on college faculties and public policy think tanks. In Washington, the venerable sixty-year-old Brookings Institution fed Democratic administrations with ideas and some of their top appointees. Brookings had little competition. But today clearly belongs to the conservatives who during the past decade have been studiously building up an impressive array of study centers across the country. As a rule, these centers favor a strong defense and oppose big government.¹⁵⁴

Indeed, the election of a president receptive to conservative legislation, along with congressional victories for Republicans on the coattails of the Reagan administration offered conservative think tanks such as Heritage an opportunity to affect change in a serious way.

According to a commentary page on Heritage's website, "Ronald Reagan and the Heritage Foundation. It's hard to tell the story of one without much of the other's. Heritage was President Reagan's favorite think tank, and Reagan was the embodiment of the ideas and principles Heritage holds dear. Together, we blazed a new path for America."¹⁵⁵ The piece continued:

The new president used *Mandate* to help realize his vision of a world free of communism, an economy that didn't crush people's dreams with high taxes and regulations, and an America the world could admire once again. He gave copies to every member of his Cabinet. The result: Nearly two-thirds of *Mandate's* two thousand recommendations were adopted or attempted by the Reagan administration.¹⁵⁶

By their own admission, the Heritage Foundation exerted a large sway over the Reagan administration. Famed American conservative author and commentator William F. Buckley, Jr.

¹⁵⁴ Malone, "Right's New Weapon—Think Tanks," *Christian Science Monitor*, February 10, 1981.

¹⁵⁵ Andrew Blasko, "Reagan and Heritage: A Unique Partnership," Heritage Foundation, June 7, 2004, accessed November 20, 2017, <http://www.heritage.org/conservatism/commentary/reagan-and-heritage-unique-partnership>.

¹⁵⁶ Blasko, "Reagan and Heritage," Heritage Foundation, June 7, 2004.

claimed, “The foundation had a great hour when Ronald Reagan was elected president and found waiting for him three volumes of Heritage material designed to help him chart the nation’s course in the right direction. Sixty percent of the suggestions enjoined on the new president were acted upon (which is why Mr. Reagan’s tenure was sixty percent successful.)”¹⁵⁷ Undoubtedly *Mandate* had a profound effect on the Reagan administration with its plethora of policy research and suggestions. The document served as a manifesto for the new president to govern by, funded by the contributions of businessmen like Joseph Coors. Likewise, according to Edwards, the Reagan transition team offered high-level executive branch positions to dozens of the authors of *Mandate*. He also claims that during the Reagan years Heritage placed more than two hundred conservatives a year in government jobs.¹⁵⁸ While *Mandate for Leadership* was the first Heritage publication to gain the serious attention of the executive branch during Ronald Reagan’s presidency, it would be followed by many other Heritage publications in the 1980s.

Another 1980 publication by Heritage policy analyst and economist, Stuart M. Butler, also argued for the implementation of probusiness policy, with the incorporation of enterprise zones. These business havens of tax exemptions and lax regulation were likewise a policy put forth by the American Legislative Exchange Council, one of Paul Weyrich’s other think tanks. In *Enterprise Zones: Pioneering in the Inner City*, Butler argued that government intervention through housing projects and urban revival had largely failed, instead he proposed a free market solution to urban crisis. He suggested that enterprise zone legislation in the United States should include the suspension of minimum wage laws, claiming “Overwhelming evidence has been provided to demonstrate that minimum wage laws create unemployment among the young and

¹⁵⁷ William F. Buckley, Jr., *Let Us Talk of Many Things: The Collected Speeches* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2008), 476.

¹⁵⁸ Edwards, *The Power of Ideas*, 50-51.

unskilled by pricing them out of the labor market.”¹⁵⁹ He advised, “In the depressed central cities, where unemployment rates are well above the national average, suspending minimum wage rates within an enterprise zone would open up new opportunities for many who are currently unemployable.”¹⁶⁰ Proposals such as these harm workers’ abilities to garner a livable wage and return business and labor relations to practices of Gilded Era America.

In 1982, the Heritage Foundation published *A Mandate for Leadership Report: The First Year*, a study examining Reagan’s first year in office. The study, edited by Richard N. Holwill, vice president of special projects, opened noting, “The Reagan administration, although headed in the proper direction, should and could have accomplished more since the election in 1980. This assessment is based on a recognition that president Reagan’s goal is to change the course of government from an expansive to a devolutionary trend, and that such a change is a monumental task.”¹⁶¹ Holwill continued, “Implementing all of the *Mandate* recommendation in one year would have been an unrealistic proposition. However, to achieve these long-term goals, many of the recommendations should have been implemented or at least initiated. The authors of the report determined that 1,270 specific suggestions met this definition of ‘short term.’”¹⁶² Although Holwill was critical of the administration for only adopting approximately two-thirds of the almost two thousand proposals made by *Mandate*, he praised Reagan for his leadership stating, “His greatest successes to date have been the direct result of his personal leadership on issues such as the budget, taxes, and foreign policy. He has truly led the country during this first year. This ability offers hope that he will be able to continue leading the nation in the directions

¹⁵⁹ Stuart M. Butler, *Enterprise Zones: Pioneering in the Inner City* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1980), 25.

¹⁶⁰ Butler, *Enterprise Zones*.

¹⁶¹ Richard N. Holwill, ed., *A Mandate for Leadership Report: The First Year* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1982), 1.

¹⁶² Holwill, *A Mandate for Leadership Report*.

promised.”¹⁶³ *A Mandate for Leadership Report: The First Year* demonstrated the organization’s hardline conservative stance and deep commitment to the reduction of the size and scope of the federal government. As conservative as Reagan seemed to many Americans, Heritage still believed there were areas for improvement in his first year that would help further the conservative agenda.

With Reagan winning reelection by a landslide in 1984, Heritage looked to build on the successes of Reagan’s first term while addressing the shortcomings of the administration. The result was another comprehensive study designed to help the Reagan White House govern. *Mandate for Leadership II: Continuing the Conservative Revolution*, edited by Stuart M. Butler, Michael Sanera, a political science professor at Northern Arizona University, and W. Bruce Weinrod, director of foreign policy and defense studies at the Heritage Foundation, was released in December of 1984. Butler wrote:

The central theme of the second Reagan administration’s approach to budget cutting must be privatization—shifting government functions to the private sector. During its first four years, the Reagan administration met with defeat after defeat in Congress on budget votes because it took the position that the only way to reduce government spending was to reduce services. It is not the only way. Private firms, for instance, can provide many government services—either under contract or completely within the private sector—much less expensively than federal workers.¹⁶⁴

He continued, “Several privatization steps should be taken. Greater use should be made of private contractors to provide commercial services to government itself. Vouchers in housing Medicare, Medicaid and education should be adopted or extended to stimulate more efficient provisions of services.”¹⁶⁵ Butler’s recommendation of privatization highlights Heritage’s crucial

¹⁶³ Ibid., 2-3.

¹⁶⁴ Stuart M. Butler, Michael Sanera, and W. Bruce Weinrod, eds., *Mandate for Leadership II: Continuing the Conservative Revolution* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1984), 6-7.

¹⁶⁵ Butler, Sanera, and Weinrod, eds., *Mandate for Leadership II*, 7.

role in innovating conservative ideological policy, understanding the public criticism of program cuts, Butler and his fellow policy analysts provided Reagan and conservatives with a more palatable free market solution to downsizing government. One area in which *Mandate II* praised the Reagan administration was national defense. In the chapter on the State Department, fellow editor, W. Bruce Weinrod, stated:

Central to Reagan's policy toward Moscow was the restoration of U.S. military strength, which had atrophied for more than a decade under Republicans Nixon and Ford as well as Democrat Carter. This involved strengthening the strategic nuclear deterrent, the rebuilding of the navy to six hundred ships and fifteen carrier task forces, accelerated procurement of new equipment for the Air Force and Army, and improvements in military pay, maintenance, training and readiness.¹⁶⁶

Weinrod's praise is in line with Heritage's historical support of increased defense spending to combat the Soviet threat in the larger world.

Building on his proposal of privatization, Stuart M. Butler collected and edited a series of speeches by conservative scholars to produce the Heritage publication, *The Privatization Option: A Strategy to Shrink the Size of Government*. In a speech given at the Heritage Foundation, E.S. Savas, professor of management at Baruch College and former assistant secretary for policy development and research at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, argued in favor of privatization. He endorsed, private government contracting, franchising, vouchers, voluntarism, and free market alternatives to government agencies.¹⁶⁷ He stated:

The evidence in favor of privatization is becoming overwhelming. At the federal level, a study by the Congressional Budget Office released in 1982 showed that eighty-one percent of current federal in-house activities could be shifted to the private sector with annual savings of approximately one-third of a billion dollars in the first year, and could grow rapidly to almost a billion dollars in later years,

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 285.

¹⁶⁷ Stuart M., Butler, ed., *The Privatization Option: A Strategy to Shrink the Size of Government* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1985), 18-22. Franchising is when the government awards an exclusive or nonexclusive right to a private firm to sell services to the public. The most common occurrences of franchising are in utility industries for electricity, gas, and water.

with a corresponding reduction in the federal government workforce of about 165,000 employees.¹⁶⁸

Heritage's adoption of privatization of government services rather than an all-out cut to social programs demonstrated a dynamic shift in conservative thinking. Not only did privatization offer the Reagan administration and conservatives with an option to cut the size of the government, but it also favored business dramatically by channeling federal spending into the private sector of the economy. As such, this strategy became part of the larger conservative agenda in the mid-1980s and moving forward.

Privatization seemed a viable option to Heritage and became a common facet in much of their policy proposal. A 1985 study, edited by Heritage fellow, Eileen M. Gardener, attempted to apply privatization to education policy. *In A New Agenda for Education*, Gardener wrote, "It [centralization] has failed American education ... Direct regulations, categorical grants, and court decisions have influenced admissions, faculty appointments, curricula, classroom procedures, research, internal governance—mainly to the detriment of the education process."¹⁶⁹ A section written by K. Alan Snyder, former headmaster of a private Christian school in Chesapeake, Virginia, advocated tuition tax credits and a voucher system to help the growth of private schools.¹⁷⁰ Snyder claimed, "Private schools antedated public education in the U.S. Today, they offer an alternative to a purely secular approach. Their vitality, however, is seriously undermined by a tax code that encourages reliance on the public system."¹⁷¹ He further explained, "Tuition tax credits or vouchers would bring a measure of equity for parents: tuition tax credits would ease the burden for those paying private school tuition vouchers would go a

¹⁶⁸ Butler, ed., *The Privatization Option*, 22.

¹⁶⁹ Eileen M. Gardner, ed., *A New Agenda for Education* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1985), ix.

¹⁷⁰ Gardner, ed., *A New Agenda for Education*, 20-26.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

step farther and use current taxes to grant parents freedom of choice.”¹⁷² Not only would implementation of tuition tax credits and vouchers effectively privatize a segment of American education, but they would also divert tax money away from larger public school districts, harming the public education system. These measures would likewise undercut teachers’ salaries and benefits with the erosion of unions during this time.

Heritage’s interest in the education process was nothing new though. In *The High School Journal*, J. Charles Park wrote in 1979, “During the last two years the Heritage Foundation has published a series of pamphlets which claim the problems of our society are the result of teaching humanism in the schools. Humanism it is claimed, is a religion which believes that there is no right or wrong, and, that many educators are practicing adherents of Humanism which undermines the religious beliefs of the family.”¹⁷³ Park also noted, “Similar themes have been found in the literature of the American Legislative Exchange Council.”¹⁷⁴ A year later in *Phi Delta Kappan*, Park also pointed to Heritage’s role in the Kanawha County textbook controversy of the mid-1970s, stating, “During the Kanawha controversy, James McKenna, attorney for the Heritage Foundation, provided legal counsel to the anti-textbook leaders.”¹⁷⁵

Privatization also seemed a workable approach to environmental protection policy for Heritage. In *Protecting the Environment: A Free Market Strategy*, editor and senior fellow at the Cato Institute, Doug Bandow argued the government should privatize federal lands, including

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ J. Charles Park, “Anti-Intellectualism, Democracy, and Teacher Education: A Look at Selected Problems Associated with Critics and the Schools,” *The High School Journal* 62, no. 8 (May 1979): 341, accessed February 19, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40365124>.

¹⁷⁴ Park, “Anti-Intellectualism, Democracy, and Teacher Education.”

¹⁷⁵ J. Charles Park, “Preachers, Politics, and Public Education: A Review of Right-Wing Pressures against Public Schooling in America,” *The Phi Delta Kappan* 61, no. 9 (May 1980): 610, accessed February 19, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20385640>.

national parks, through sales to private firms and conservation organizations.¹⁷⁶ Bandow claimed such measures would, "... both reduce the vulnerability of the resources to everchanging political majorities and force organizations and individuals to bear the costs as well as the benefits of development."¹⁷⁷ Authorizing such sales would put protection of the country's valuable resources in the hands of private interests—arguably a conflict of interest. Most notably, these conflicts of interest in privatization of government programs could lead to large contracts being given to political allies, relatives or friends of public officials—who might not be qualified to perform such services.

In a Heritage report for the fiscal year 1986 Stuart M. Butler offered this advice for the Reagan administration, "Instead of simply offering a laundry list of program cuts ... the administration should combine its budget request with a political strategy that aims to alter the balance of power decisively in favor of the taxpayer."¹⁷⁸ Key to this new strategy was the privatization option. Butler purported, "This privatization of federal programs would enable conservatives to pursue the objective of budget reduction while, in most instances, actually improving the level of services. This approach also can be used to construct a private sector 'mirror image' of the political dynamics that stimulate the growth of the public sector."¹⁷⁹ During the Reagan years conservatives made ideological inroads to privatizing utilities, healthcare, retirement insurance, education, and prisons. In a 1987 editorial in the *New York Times*, Joel Brinkley reported on the privatization efforts in the Reagan camp, stating, "President Reagan today appointed a commission to study ways government functions can be turned over to

¹⁷⁶ Doug Bandow, ed., *Protecting the Environment: A Free Market Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1986), 11-15.

¹⁷⁷ Bandow, ed., *Protecting the Environment*, 18.

¹⁷⁸ Stuart M. Butler, *Taming the Federal Budget* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1985), 4-5.

¹⁷⁹ Butler, *Taming the Federal Budget*, 6.

private business.”¹⁸⁰ The piece continued, “Professor David F. Linowes, a political economist at the University of Illinois, was named chairman of the President’s Commission on Privatization, and said the twelve-member panel’s mandate ‘is very broad.’ It will ‘probe the entire dimension of government operations’ and offer recommendations in six months, he said.”¹⁸¹ Clearly Heritage’s research on privatization had a marked influence on the president, with a 1987 Heritage report claiming the president’s budget for fiscal year 1988 contained eight privatization initiatives, aimed at cutting almost ten million dollars from the year’s deficit.¹⁸²

Beyond their agenda to cut the federal budget through the rollback taxes and regulations, accompanied by the free market solution of privatization, Heritage also sought to have a dramatic influence in the field of foreign policy during the Reagan years. Special attention was always given to the communist Soviet Union, which stood as the antithesis to conservative ideas of the free market. Attempting to define the Reagan doctrine in foreign policy, former United Nations ambassador Jeane J. Kirkpatrick penned the Heritage study, *The Reagan Doctrine and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Discussing the Reagan initiatives, she noted, “The Reagan administration’s response to the Soviet military build-up was, of course, to rebuild our defense, to resume work on cancelled weapons systems, research, and development.”¹⁸³ Here Kirkpatrick referred to increased defense spending and Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative, a missile defense system intended to protect the United States from attack by Soviet nuclear weapons. Kirkpatrick also explained the Reagan administration’s shift in foreign policy to fight the spread of communism abroad, maintaining, “It should be emphasized that the sympathy, solidarity, and assistance

¹⁸⁰ Joel Brinkley, “Reagan Appoints Privatization Unit,” *New York Times*, September 4, 1987, accessed November 29, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/09/04/us/reagan-appoints-privatization-unit.html>.

¹⁸¹ Brinkley, “Reagan Appoints Privatization Unit,” *New York Times*, September 4, 1987.

¹⁸² Stephen Moore and Stuart M. Butler, eds., *Privatization: A Strategy for Taming the Federal Budget*. Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, (1987), 1.

¹⁸³ Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, *The Reagan Doctrine and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1985), 9.

offered by Reagan did not include U.S. participation in combat. Reagan doctrine is sharply distinguished from the ‘containment’ or ‘rollback’ approaches.”¹⁸⁴ She concluded, “Under Ronald Reagan the U.S. is prepared to help others protect or restore that freedom and independence but not to assume responsibility for the task.”¹⁸⁵ A claim that undoubtedly pleased conservatives who were reticent to see the United States take an active role in military campaigns, preferring U.S. training and support for anti-communist forces instead.

Heritage further extrapolated on the intricacies of U.S.-Soviet relations in their publication, *The Heritage Foundation Arms Control Handbook: A Guide to the History, Arsenal, and Issues of U.S.-Soviet Negotiations*. Discussing the history of the arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union to develop strategic defense systems, the work stated, “The Soviet Union has been researching laser and particle beam weapons since the 1960s. By contrast, the U.S. intensified its military research on these technologies only after Ronald Reagan launched the Strategic Defense Initiative in 1983.”¹⁸⁶ Here Heritage credited Reagan with strengthening U.S. military power through his foreign policy initiatives. The *Arms Control Handbook* also examined the Reagan administration decision to end the SALT II treaty, an agreement the foundation had been opposed to since the Carter years. Although the Senate never ratified the treaty, both the Carter and Reagan White Houses informally abided by the arms agreement. According to the *Arms Control Handbook*, “To restore the survivability and effectiveness of U.S. strategic forces, Reagan restated support for the Strategic Defense Initiative, ordered the acceleration of the Advanced Cruise Missile program, asked Congress to fund one hundred MX ICBMs, and instructed the Defense Department to proceed with the small

¹⁸⁴ Kirkpatrick, *The Reagan Doctrine and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 11.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ W. Bruce Weinrod et al., eds., *The Heritage Foundation Arms Control Handbook: A Guide to the History, Arsenal, and Issues of U.S.-Soviet Negotiations* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1987), 62.

ICBM program to complement the MX.”¹⁸⁷ These measures were all in line with Heritage recommendations embodied in *Mandate* and *Mandate II*.

As the Reagan years came to a close in Washington, Heritage began to prepare for a future without the conservative icon in office. Lee Edwards wrote, “Heritage decided it was time to return to its congressional roots and help move policy in a conservative direction through the legislative branch ... At the same time, while continuing to publish short papers on the issues of the day the foundation focused more on selected major themes like welfare reform and free trade.”¹⁸⁸ Indeed while Heritage began to shift direction toward addressing the gridlock in Congress, the foundation still managed to find the time to publish *Mandate for Leadership III: Policy Strategies for the 1990s*. Likewise, in conjunction with Paul Weyrich’s Free Congress Foundation, Heritage published *Issues ’88: A Platform for America*. The three-volume series encompassed policy planks for conservative politicians in the 1988 election cycle. Volume one and two, written by the Heritage Foundation focused on domestic and foreign and defense concerns, respectively. Volume three, concerning social policy was handled by the Free Congress Foundation. In the foreword, coauthored by Fuelner and Weyrich, the presidents of two of Washington’s most influential think tanks, wrote, “More than a policy document *Issues ’88* is a blueprint for mobilizing a broad coalition of Americans. This coalition defies traditional partisan labels. It consists of Americans of all parties, sectors, and geographic areas who would build on the accomplishments of the Reagan years rather than retreat to the failed policies of earlier periods ... In short, this is a blueprint for making America number one again.”¹⁸⁹ *Issues ’88*, like its predecessors endorsed a wholesale reduction to the size of government, privatization

¹⁸⁷ Weinrod et al., eds., *The Heritage Foundation Arms Control Handbook*, 75.

¹⁸⁸ Edwards, *The Power of Ideas*, 99.

¹⁸⁹ Mark B. Liedl, *Issues ’88: A Platform for America*, vol. 1, (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1988), viii.

options for infrastructure improvement, environmental preservation, and introducing voucher systems for Medicare and Medicaid, along with a hardline stance against the Soviet threat abroad.

By the close of the Reagan era the Heritage Foundation had undergone a drastic metamorphosis. From their inception almost a decade before Reagan entered office as the Analysis and Research Association, Heritage had grown into an organization responsible for over half the legislative policies adopted by the president in his first term. Indisputably the foundation and the president maintained a special relationship. While Reagan may not have adopted all of Heritage's policy proposals, he had often met them with an open attitude. At decade's end the Heritage Foundation had managed to capitalize on the growing wave of conservative thought ushered in when Reagan took the oath of office in 1981—introducing innovative ideas in conservative policy, including application of supply-side economics, tax reform, and privatization. These intellectual inroads made by the foundation helped to invigorate conservative politics, subverting the title of the party of ideas from the Democrats. Indeed, Heritage had surpassed their liberal counterparts in both financial contributions and effectiveness, by garnering funding from the business coalition and disenfranchised Americans alike while pioneering a new type of policy research and writing. The efforts by individuals at the Heritage Foundation revolutionized conservative intellectual thought, drafting abstract conservative ideas into concrete policy that has changed the course of the American political landscape.

Chapter 4—The Free Congress Foundation

The Summer 2003 issue of the Southern Poverty Law Center’s quarterly magazine, *Intelligence Report*, outlined several major organizations in the national political network that promoted bigotry. Journalist Chip Berlet wrote, “How do ideas that once were denounced as racist, bigoted, unfair, or just plain mean-spirited get transmitted into mainstream discussions and political debates? Through a wide array of political and social networks. Such networks are a robust part of democracy in action, and include media outlets, think tanks, pressure groups, funders and leaders.”¹⁹⁰ Among the groups Berlet discussed in the piece, was the Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, often referred to as simply the Free Congress Foundation. According to Berlet, “In 1974, ultra-conservative political strategist Paul Weyrich and beer magnate Joseph Coors co-founded the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, which evolved into the Free Congress Foundation (FCF). This came after the Heritage Foundation they had earlier helped start moved too far into the mainstream for Weyrich’s taste.”¹⁹¹ Berlet continued on to address the Free Congress Foundation’s significance in the culture wars of the late twentieth century, noting, “In 1987, Weyrich commissioned *Cultural Conservatism: Toward a New National Agenda*, which became the script for what has become known as the ‘culture wars’.”¹⁹²

Indeed, the Free Congress Foundation, like Weyrich’s other Washington think tanks, the American Legislative Exchange Council and the Heritage Foundation, has played a pivotal role in shaping the political discourse of the United States. The organization was founded first as a

¹⁹⁰ Chip Berlet, “Into the Mainstream,” *Intelligence Report*, August 14, 2003, accessed January 10, 2018, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2003/mainstream>.

¹⁹¹ Berlet, “Into the Mainstream,” *Intelligence Report*, August 14, 2003.

¹⁹² Ibid. The term “culture wars” became a popular in the United States during the 1980s and 1990s and became a common talking point of many candidates. For an introduction to the ideas espoused by liberals and conservative during the culture wars, see Fred Whitehead, ed., *Culture Wars: Opposing Viewpoints*, Opposing Viewpoints Series (San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, 1994).

political action committee under name of the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress. In 1977 The Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress reorganized creating the think tank known as the Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, with the Committee serving as a separate PAC arm before adopting the name, Free Congress Political Action Committee in 1986. As the group changed its status to that of a think tank, Weyrich began his focus on social issues. The Free Congress Foundation was originally composed of two research divisions referred to as the Political Division, for congressional studies, and the Family Policy Division, devoted to social causes. As Free Congress evolved, these divisions were renamed the Institute for Government and Politics and the Institute for Cultural Conservatism, respectively. In 2009, after Weyrich's death, the organization named former Republican Virginia Governor, Jim Gilmore, as President and CEO. Under Gilmore, the organization moved away from social issues, toward more economic concerns, and once again changed its name, now operating under the title of the American Opportunity Foundation. Throughout its more than forty-year history, Weyrich's organization has undergone several rebrands, although its devotion to conservative principles has never wavered. Despite the Free Congress Foundation's drastic contribution to the conservative movement their history remains relatively unexplored.

In the wake of the Watergate scandal, and disillusioned with the leadership of the Republican Party, conservative activist Paul Weyrich set out to create a new organization that would have an even greater influence on election cycles than his other endeavors. Weyrich's new institution in the conservative network would serve as the foil to the liberal political action committee, the National Committee for an Effective Congress, founded in 1948 by Eleanor Roosevelt.¹⁹³ Key issues to Weyrich's new organization centered on the abortion debate, a strong

¹⁹³ Lee Edwards, *The Conservative Revolution: The Movement that Remade America* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1999), 186.

national defense, free market economics, and right-to-work laws.¹⁹⁴ In its first year of operation in 1974, the Committee raised over 400,000 dollars, and donated 194,000 dollars to candidates.¹⁹⁵ Although the elections were a resounding defeat for Republicans, Weyrich continued his faithful work forging the institutions necessary for conservatives to reclaim control of government. His new brainchild, the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, began the revolt at the grassroots level, working to raise donations from conservatives across the country and put them to use on the campaign trail. This coordinated direct mail campaign was led by Weyrich ally and fellow New Right leader, Richard Viguerie.¹⁹⁶ According to political journalist and author, Russ Bellant, “From the very beginning, the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress (CSFC) got involved in local elections, recruiting right-wing candidates as well as supporting announced candidates.”¹⁹⁷ In addition to financial aid to these fledgling candidates, the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress also offered support organizing grassroots mobilization efforts and creating phone banks of contacts, and training for both candidates and activists.¹⁹⁸

In a newspaper clipping from the *Washington Post*, entitled, “Group Seeks to Oust Liberal Lawmakers,” found in Weyrich’s personal papers, elements of this type of grassroots organization are evident. The clipping opened, “About fifty thousand Americans received letters from Sen. James McClure, R-Idaho, in early April [1975] pleading for their dollars to help defeat one hundred radicals in 1976.”¹⁹⁹ The article continues, “The letter is part of a test to see how

¹⁹⁴ Robert Biersack, Paul S. Herrnson, and Clyde Wilcox, eds., *Risky Business?: PAC Decisionmaking in Congressional Elections* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1994), 56-57.

¹⁹⁵ Russ Bellant, *The Coors Connection: How Coors Family Philanthropy Undermines Democratic Pluralism* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1991), 16.

¹⁹⁶ Bellant, *The Coors Connection*.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Biersack, Herrnson, and Wilcox, *Risky Business?*, 58-59.

¹⁹⁹ *Washington Post*, “Group Seeks to Oust Liberal Lawmakers,” May 11, 1975, Box 5, Folder 5, Paul M. Weyrich Scrapbooks, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

much money the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress can raise. The committee is headed by Paul Weyrich, Colorado brewer Joseph Coors's man in Washington.”²⁰⁰ As this *Washington Post* article suggests, Weyrich, in collaboration with Senator McClure had begun to lay the groundwork for effective campaign fundraising—a strategy traditionally employed by the Democratic Party.

In the fall of 1975, in an interview with *Conservative Digest*, Weyrich outlined his strategy moving forward to the 1976 election season. When asked about the Committee for a Free Congress and its goals in the future, Weyrich replied:

We are trying to elect conservatives to Congress. We are attempting to work with local people to recruit conservatives, to go into primaries where it's necessary, and to elect them. But not just give them money. We give them expertise, tools with which they can be elected. We help them package the conservative message to the great bulk of the good Americans out there who believe as we do but then go out and vote liberal.²⁰¹

Referring to the success of the Democratic Party in the 1974 elections, Weyrich noted, “You know I'm not ashamed at all to admit that I look at what the enemy is doing and am guided by what they do and do very well. They don't just throw money into a campaign. They hire some expertise that goes in and works with a local candidate on how to shape the media campaign, how to work a good precinct organization and so on.”²⁰² Continuing, Weyrich detailed the organizations shortcomings in 1974 and the road toward overcoming them:

Well, there were an awful lot of candidates who came within two or three percentage points of winning. Upon reexamining what took place, we know that if some expertise had been available they could have made it. It was just a case of the wrong kind of media campaign, or no formal organization, or the campaign relying too much upon the local Republican organization which didn't bother to turn out, or any number of these factors.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ *Washington Post*, “Group Seeks to Oust Liberal Lawmakers,” May 11, 1975, Paul M. Weyrich Scrapbooks.

²⁰¹ “How Conservatives Can Win,” *Conservative Digest* 1, no. 4 (August 1975): 34.

²⁰² “How Conservatives Can Win,” *Conservative Digest*, 34.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 35.

When asked what advice he would give everyday citizens hoping to aid the conservative movement, Weyrich replied, “You can organize any group. The left has proved this. They organize Indians, they organize Spanish Americans, they organize blacks, they organize union people, they organize religious people, they organize everybody. I think our conservative friends ought to take a look at what the liberals do.”²⁰⁴ He continued on:

We have to have counter organizations on the right side, including magazines, including newspapers. We have to have outside operations to elect people and to support them after we get here. We need organizations to articulate conservative thought, organizations to unite the pro-free enterprise interests... I think conservatives have finally come to realize that they’ve been snookered. They’ve been outorganized, they’ve been outwitted, they’ve been out-financed and now they want to do something about it.²⁰⁵

On the question of when Americans would see a conservative Congress, Weyrich concluded:

We will have a conservative Congress if, I say if and not when, we can mobilize the conservative sentiment that is out there now. In other words, if we could get the people who are already turned off by big government and have become much more conservative in recent years, if we could convince them to by voting in the next election it would honestly have an effect, I think we’d win and win overwhelmingly.²⁰⁶

In spite of Weyrich’s great hopes and the Committee’s fundraising efforts—the organization had joined with the National Conservative Political Action Committee to raise over 3.5 million dollars—the elections of 1976 had resulted in a virtual stalemate.²⁰⁷ Moving forward Weyrich doubled down his efforts. The Coors family helped in these endeavors, personally donating over 22,000 dollars to the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress for the 1977-78 election cycle, with other Coors executives also contributing.²⁰⁸ With funding from their

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 36.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 36.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 36.

²⁰⁷ Frederick S. Thompson, ed., *Confronting the New Conservatism: The Rise of the Right in America* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2007), 83.

²⁰⁸ Bellant, *The Coors Connection*, 17.

wealthy patrons and money raised through the direct mail campaign, the Committee spent almost two million dollars on the 1978 elections.²⁰⁹ At the same time, the Committee was working toward promoting anti-homosexual and anti-labor policy. According to Bellant, “In 1977, it [CSFC] advocated a cutoff of federal Legal Services Corporation assistance in legal disputes involving lesbian and gay civil rights. The same year, it also backed legislation limiting federal employee unions and pushed for the defeats of the common site picketing bill supported by the AFL-CIO.”²¹⁰

In a 1978 interview with *Conservative Digest*, Weyrich discussed the effectiveness of ideological political action committees. He stated, “The ideological PACs have begun to have a real impact on the way this country is going. That’s because they are free to support whatever candidates that want. They can get into primaries of both parties. This enabled them, for example, to support a conservative Democrat in a primary and then transfer that support to the conservative Republican in the general.”²¹¹ He continued on to elaborate on the failures of the last election cycle, noting, “The business PACs, I think, have been a disaster. In 1976 they gave most of their money to incumbents, helping reelect people who were consistent opponents of theirs. That may be changing somewhat, and I hope we will see a drastic change in this election.”²¹² Weyrich’s hopes were realized, with moderate Republican gains in the midterm victory laying the ground for the conservative revolution in the coming decade.

A 1979 conference report by the Free Congress Foundation, *Unity and Diversity: A Comparative Look at the Close Elections in 1978*, examined nine crucial campaigns in the House

²⁰⁹ John J. Flalka, “PACs Set Election Expense Record,” *Washington Star*, December 21, 1978.

²¹⁰ Bellant, *The Coors Connection*, 17.

²¹¹ “Washington PAC Spearheads Conservative Movement,” *Conservative Digest* 4, no. 9 (September 1978): 16.

²¹² “Washington PAC Spearheads Conservative Movement,” *Conservative Digest*.

during the midterm election—perhaps most notably the defeat of future Texas Governor and President of the United States, George W. Bush, at the hands of conservative Democrat Kent Hance in Texas’s nineteenth district, and the victory of future House Leader, Newt Gingrich in Georgia’s sixth district. Foundation staffer and author, Susan M. Marshner opened the report noting, “This past December, following the November, 1978 elections, the Free Congress Foundation undertook the project of bringing together nearly thirty active participants in selected congressional campaigns for a three-day conference.”²¹³ She continued, “With campaign managers present, along with a variety of outside experts, the object was not so much a case by case critique as it was an answer to a deceptively simple question. What key factors (within our control) made the difference between the successful campaigns and those which only came close to victory?”²¹⁴

The conference discussed several crucial functions of each campaign that either won or lost the election, including, campaign management, budget and finance, research, media, the candidate themselves, and voter identification and turnout. While all these factors played a role in these close elections, Marshner argued that campaign management stood out as the decisive factor in the victories discussed. She wrote, “Clearly the most fundamental element and the beginning point of any campaign is its management ... In a way, management is something intangible because it touches every other aspect of a campaign, from budgets and hiring personnel, to such indirect factors as morale and a sense of purpose among paid staff and volunteers.”²¹⁵ Indeed, management, not name recognition or concrete policy proposal secured political newcomer Jim Jefferies the victory over Democratic incumbent, Martha Keys, in

²¹³ Susan M. Marshner, *Unity and Diversity: A Comparative Look at the Close Elections in 1978* (Washington, D.C.: Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, 1979), 5.

²¹⁴ Susan M. Marshner, *Unity and Diversity*.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

Kansas's second district. Jefferies's campaign manager, Bruce Eriksen, had full control over the campaign and built Jefferies as a candidate from scratch, and secured the necessary funding from political action committees.²¹⁶ Likewise, management proved a central theme in the Bush loss. Despite outspending his opponent, Hance's management coordinated a media strategy that played on Bush as an eastern elite in the heartland of Texas.²¹⁷

The findings of this conference, covered in *Unity and Diversity: A Comparative Look at the Close Elections in 1978*, helped to move the conservative agenda forward with the elections of 1980 in mind. The conference offered conservatives a meeting ground to discuss their successes and failures of the midterm elections in an effort to develop a strategy for victory. Their findings pointed toward the key role played by campaign management in creating a cohesive plan of attack by paid staffers and volunteers.

Similarly, after the astounding conservative victories in 1980, the Free Congress Foundation sponsored another conference to examine seven Congressional campaigns from diverse districts to discuss campaign methodology and chart the course and strategy of future election cycles. The findings were condensed and published as, *Trends in the 1980 Congressional Elections: A Conference Report*. Author, Susan Marshner Arico, wrote:

In many ways, the congressional races are more indicative than presidential campaigns of what motivates the electorate in a given election year and how deep-seated its desires really are. A change at the presidential level may or may not accompany a major turnover in Congress. But when it does, as in the 1980 elections, it is clear that something which goes beyond the superficial media excitement always surrounding a presidential race may be developing.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ Ibid., 13.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 35.

²¹⁸ Susan M. Arico, *Trends in the 1980 Congressional Elections: A Conference Report* (Washington, D.C.: Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, 1981), 1.

Speaking to the Republican victories in 1980, Arico continued on, “Altogether, the winning Republican candidates seemed to dominate and control the debate, something which Democrats had done very well in the past ... In many areas of the country, the old Democratic coalition of organized labor, blue collar workers, ethnics and Catholics failed to hold together, not only at statewide races, but also at the congressional level.”²¹⁹ Arico’s words point to conservative successes in not only adopting liberal campaign tactics, but also their inroads in chipping away at the strength of the New Deal coalition.

Opening remarks for the conference were made by national pollster Lance Tarrance, who discussed the importance of the final thirty days in a campaign, coalition building, and independent expenditures by political action committees. A transcript of his speech and the questions directed to him afterward were included in the report. Discussing the Arkansas gubernatorial race between incumbent Democrat, Bill Clinton, and his Republican challenger, Frank White, with reference to the importance of coalition building, Tarrance said, “He [Frank White] won, in my opinion, with hard organization, good campaign media, and some interesting coalition work among several kinds of Democrats.”²²⁰ Elaborating on this coalition, he continued, “This election had some peculiarities because certain Democrats did not like Bill Clinton for cultural reasons. He was a Yale graduate and an Oxford scholar. His wife had not taken his name because she was a feminist. Also, Clinton had quite a few very liberal Democrats helping him run the state government. So he was never perceived as a good old Razorback.”²²¹ White’s campaign targeted what it referred to as “switch” and “soft” Democrats, those who held conservative beliefs and could be wooed to his cause, to establish a coalition between these

²¹⁹ Arico, *Trends in the 1980 Congressional Elections*, 2.

²²⁰ Ibid., 61

²²¹ Ibid.

voters and the state's minority of Republicans that propelled him to the governorship. Tarrance also spoke to the key role political action committees could play in a campaign. He charged that outside expenditures in the 1980 elections by political action committees such as the National Conservative Political Action Committee and the Moral Majority, "negated the effects of the last minute, emotional appeals by Democrats."²²² Likewise, he claimed, "A second possible good effect of outside expenditures is the focusing attention on the incumbent ... By placing such a hard spotlight on the incumbent, these groups indirectly allow the challenger to develop his positive image. While the incumbent is busy answering charges, the challenger grows in a positive light."²²³

The postelection conferences in 1978 and 1980 held by the Free Congress Foundation and their subsequent conference reports point to their vital role in conservative campaign strategy. They illustrate the think tank's active role in a long-term strategy to oust Democratic incumbents. Their analysis emphasized the necessity of structured campaign management, coalition building between conservatives of both major parties, and the possible influence of political action committees on the electoral process. By 1980, Weyrich's think tank was demonstrating the impact he had hoped for when he launched it following of the Watergate scandal, by serving as a breeding ground of conservative campaign strategy.

As it became clear that political action committees were having a profound effect on election cycles, the Free Congress Foundation continued to produce literature that supported the active role of political action committees and their financial contributions to candidates and causes. In 1981 the foundation published, *Campaign Regulation and Public Policy: PACs, Ideology, and the FEC*. Authored by political science professor and Free Congress Foundation

²²² Ibid., 70.

²²³ Ibid., 70-71.

staffer, Stuart Rothenberg, the study examined the Federal Election Commission and the spending limitations it established for individuals and political action committees. Election laws monitoring financial contributions owe their origins to the Progressive Era and the Tillman Act of 1907, which banned campaign donations by corporations. In the subsequent decades Congress passed various other reform measures such as the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, which restricted the activities and power of labor unions in elections among other limitations. With the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, Congress sought to consolidate electoral regulation through an increased emphasis on campaign donor disclosure. The act was signed into law by the Nixon administration in 1972 and has remained a target of conservative criticism since. In 1974, the act was amended to place limits on campaign contributions and expenditures, and the Federal Election Commission was established as the regulatory body governing campaign finance law.

Rothenberg's study argued for a rollback on campaign finance regulation, claiming regulation hindered both free speech and competitiveness. He argued, "Any legislation which strictly limits contributions automatically protects incumbents. Even if the advantages of the frank are minimized during an election period, incumbents are able to draw the sort of media coverage and perform the sort of constituency services which can assist them in their quest for reelection."²²⁴ He continued later, "Contribution limits are also anti-competitive in that they make it all but impossible for a third party to present its view to the public successfully. A third party candidate would undoubtedly find it easier to get large contributions from a few like-minded supporters than from a large pool of small contributors."²²⁵ Discussing restrictions on political action committees, Rothenberg maintained, "Restricting PACs would pose a threat to

²²⁴ Stuart Rothenberg, *Campaign Regulation and Public Policy: PACs, Ideology, and the FEC* (Washington, D.C.: Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, 1981), 13.

²²⁵ Rothenberg, *Campaign Regulation and Public Policy*, 14.

the freedom of association. It would eliminate an outlet for those individuals who wish to make an impact on the political system but want an alternative to the existing parties. If ten individuals can contribute separately to a campaign, should they not be allowed to pool their resources and contribute as a group?"²²⁶

Rothenberg's defense of financial contributions to campaign efforts demonstrated the efforts of the Free Congress Foundation to ensure the electoral progress made by conservatives with the help of outside expenditures and political action committees was not curtailed. The organization, which owed its origins to a political action committee, was working to produce literature that ensured the survival and viability of the new conservative tool to unseat liberal incumbents. Likewise, Rothenberg's criticisms of the FEC supported the conservative cause of downsizing the oversight of the federal government.

Further exploring the idea of coalition politics, the Free Congress Foundation hosted a conference on October 27, 1981 with sessions featuring politicians experienced in bipartisan conservative coalition work. An edited transcript of the proceedings, *Reapportionment and Coalition Outlooks for the 1980s*, was organized by Stuart Rothenberg. Newt Gingrich was part of a panel devoted to examining political coalitions and party discipline in Congress. Discussing coalition building and the political realignment occurring in the United States, Gingrich said:

The reality is that most of the Boll Weevils [conservative southern Democrats], in their basic value system, are vastly closer to Ronald Reagan than they are to Tip O'Neill, or even, within the Texas delegation, than they are to the Majority Leader. Most of them come from districts that are even closer to Reagan. And what is occurring is a shifting in world views, between a liberal welfare state, devoted to reshaping money, towards a conservative opportunity state, in which you have a whole different set of rhetoric, a whole different set of responsibility.²²⁷

²²⁶ Ibid., 44.

²²⁷ Stuart Rothenberg, ed., *Reapportionment and Coalition Outlooks for the 1980s* (Washington, D.C.: Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, 1981), 71.

Explaining the conservative strategy for 1982 in light of the realignment, Gingrich claimed, “If we manage to force the 1982 election into a realigning referendum in which the choice is if you want to rebuild the liberal welfare state or do you want to engage in building a new conservative opportunity state, then I have no doubt that we will either hold our own or gain seats.”²²⁸

With the 1982 election cycle on the horizon, the Free Congress Foundation published, *Ethnic Voters and National Issues: Coalitions in the 1980s*, a study conducted by Free Congress staffer Stuart Rothenberg and Free Congress vice president of operations Eric Licht, with the help of pollster Frank M. Newport, a vice president of Tarrance and Associates. The study examined the political ideology of five ethnic groups, which historically supported Democratic candidates, Italian Catholics, Irish Catholics, Polish Catholics, Hispanic Catholics, and Jews. One thousand people were surveyed from these five groups, two hundred from each ethnic group. Discussing recent electoral trends, Rothenberg wrote:

The results of the 1980 elections question traditional assumptions about what attitudes particular groups hold on economic, social, and defense issues, and how they behave at the voting booth ... Ronald Reagan directed an appeal to blue collar Democrats, and many of those voters, who are ethnics and who traditionally backed Democrats, opted to support the Republican presidential nominee in 1980.²²⁹

Although he conceded, “However, it is not yet clear whether ethnic Americans are ready to turn their backs completely on the Democratic party, and it is equally uncertain whether the policies being advocated by the Republican party and its standard-bearer will lead those ethnic voters to continue to support conservatives and Republicans throughout the 1980s.”²³⁰ The aim of the study was to answer these questions, and gain insight into possible ethnic inroads conservatives

²²⁸ Rothenberg, *Reapportionment and Coalition Outlooks for the 1980s*.

²²⁹ Stuart Rothenberg, Eric Licht, and Frank M. Newport, *Ethnic Voters and National Issues: Coalitions in the 1980s* (Washington, D.C.: Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, 1982), 1.

²³⁰ Rothenberg, Licht, and Newport, *Ethnic Voters and National Issues*. 2.

could explore in forming a coalition.

After Rothenberg examined the polling data he noted, “A sizeable percentage of Hispanics identify themselves as conservative Democrats, but only 8.5 percent said they usually vote Republican. Even among Jews, who have a reputation of being liberal Democrats, over 30 percent identified themselves as either Republicans or conservative Democrats.”²³¹ Despite these possible conservative inroads, the study found different trends among each ethnic group. Italian and Hispanic voters were more likely to lean further to the right on foreign policy issues, than the other ethnic groups, while Poles and Italians seemed to be the most socially conservative. Each ethnic group also seemed to firmly believe government held a responsibility to ensure the economic welfare of its citizens.²³² Rothenberg noted that perhaps the greatest divide among those polled was education—those possessing only a high school education or less were more likely to support conservative stances on foreign policy and social issues.²³³ In conclusion he wrote, “The challenge to both conservatives and liberals is to breach the ideological and cultural differences between more highly educated, white collar ethnics and less educated, blue collar ethnics. A winning coalition probably needs elements of both groups.”²³⁴

The 1982 project of the Free Congress Foundation, *At the Eye of the Storm: James Watt and the Environmentalists*, authored by conservative writer and activist Ron Arnold, examined environmental policy and James G. Watt, who was nominated as Secretary of the Interior in 1980 by president-elect Ronald Reagan. Watt was perhaps the most controversial of the new administration’s appointments. Arnold’s *At the Eye of the Storm* sought to validate the Watt appointment in a dramatic biographical recounting of the life of the “real” James Watt, a

²³¹ Ibid., 87.

²³² Ibid., 87-89.

²³³ Ibid., 104-05.

²³⁴ Ibid., 105.

charming, plain-folk, Wyoming lawyer. Arnold's writing, interspersed with chapters devoted to critiquing the environmentalist movement and its reproaches of Watt, was an attempt by the Free Congress Foundation to attack the legitimacy of the environmental movement. Demonstrating this, in his introduction, Arnold made the claim, "We cannot survive by putting 'Keep Out' signs around all our natural resources, we cannot survive by saddling our producers with excessive regulation that needlessly raises costs and lowers productivity. Just because industry is now a minority does not mean that we can abuse it any more than we can abuse the environment without inviting disaster."²³⁵ Boldly probusiness claims such as these set the tone of Arnold's writing and offer insight into the Free Congress Foundation's environmental agenda.

Watt, the Wyoming-native, first cut his teeth in Washington as a legislative assistant and council to family friend Milward Simpson, who in 1962 was elected to the United States Senate. In 1966, when Simpson stepped down from office due to illness, a young James Watt found himself working as a lobbyist for the United States Chamber of Commerce, the largest lobbying arm of the business community. At the behest of the Chamber, Watt served as an aide to Nixon Secretary of the Interior appointee, Wally Hickel. In a show of gratitude Watt was appointed as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Power Resources.²³⁶ In 1977, Joseph Coors approached Watt with the offer to become the president and chief legal officer of the Mountain States Legal Foundation a public nonprofit law firm funded by Coors and other business interests motivated by the Powell Memorandum and concerned with economic and property rights in the face of federal regulation.²³⁷

²³⁵ Ron Arnold, *At the Eye of the Storm: James Watt and the Environmentalists* (Chicago, IL: Regnery Gateway, 1982), xviii.

²³⁶ Arnold, *At the Eye of the Storm*, 11.

²³⁷ Ibid., 22. See also, Bellant, *The Coors Connection*, 84-90.

Watts's Coors connections and his history at the Chamber of Commerce, coupled with his distaste for regulation, positive stance on development, and evangelical Christian leanings had made him a favorite son of the New Right in the 1970s, although some mainstream Republicans felt he was "too conservative."²³⁸ When the Reagan White House's first pick for Secretary of the Interior, Clifford Hansen withdrew his nomination over a conflict of interest due to his ranching business's long-term land leases with the Bureau of Land Management, Watt was the administration's new pick.²³⁹

Watt won favor in the Reagan camp through initiatives to cut Interior spending. According to Arnold, "In overall terms, Watt reduced the Carter administration's fiscal year 1982 budget by 877 million dollars to a total of 5.76 billion dollars as well as rescission of 383 million dollars in fiscal year 1981 funds."²⁴⁰ He continued:

Specifically, Watt established a funding moratorium on grant programs for recreation and historic preservation ... A moratorium, on federal land acquisition from the Land and Water Conservation fund was designed to save almost four hundred million dollars in the following nineteen months ... The Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service was consolidated into the National Park Service (not eliminated, and critics complained). The Youth Conservation Corps (sixty million dollars) was abolished altogether.²⁴¹

Roll back of environmental regulation at the federal level by the Watt's Department of the Interior drew ire from the environmentalist block and continued to make him a controversial figure in Washington, until his resignation in 1983 following comments he made during a speech to the United States Chamber of Commerce. According to the *New York Times*, "Mr. Watt came under fire last month from Republicans and Democrats alike by what was intended as a light-hearted description of the balance on a coal advisory commission. 'We have every kind of

²³⁸ Ibid., 25.

²³⁹ Ibid., 26.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 132.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

mixture you can have,’ he said. ‘I have a black, I have a woman, two Jews and a cripple. And we have talent.’”²⁴²

In the early 1980s the Free Congress Foundation also undertook a campaign to reform the criminal justice system, and in particular the Supreme Court of the United States. To jumpstart the effort Free Congress hosted a conference on June 14, 1982 featuring panels discussing topics such as regulatory reform and the Supreme Court’s impact on religious freedom. An edited transcript of the conference was produced by Free Congress staffers Patrick B. McGuigan and Claudia A. Kieper and published as *A Conference on Judicial Reform: The Proceedings*. In the opening remarks of the conference, foundation president, Paul Weyrich claimed, “When we began the effort on the judicial reform, which was in the fall in 1980 when I called Pat McGuigan into my office and suggested that we get into this area, it was our intention to make the whole question of reforming the judiciary a legitimate topic for national discussion. And I think we’re on our way to doing just that.”²⁴³ He stated later:

I think we are the ones, the conservative element that is represented in these panels, the people here who have initiated these various topics of discussions, we are the one who are trying to save the system, rather than destroy it. Those who have so distorted the legal system of the country that we are now contending with this hyperactivism, *they* are the ones who have it on their consciences, who, in my judgement, have begun to destroy the system.²⁴⁴

The first panel of the conference focused on regulatory reform and judicial review in the wake of the “regulatory explosion” of the 1960s and 1970s. Panelist and Associate Deputy Attorney General of the Department of Justice, Bruce Fein, spoke out in favor of ending judicial

²⁴² Steven R. Weisman, “Watt Quits Post: President Accepts with ‘Reluctance,’” *New York Times*, October 10, 1983, accessed January 20, 2018, <http://www.nytimes.com/1983/10/10/us/watt-quits-post-president-accepts-with-reluctance.html?pagewanted=all>.

²⁴³ Patrick B. McGuigan and Claudia A. Kieper, eds., *A Conference on Judicial Reform: The Proceedings* (Washington, D.C.: Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, 1982), 1.

²⁴⁴ McGuigan and Kieper, *A Conference on Judicial Reform*, 1-2.

review of federal regulatory agencies. He claimed, “In sum, judicial review of agency action is thrice-flawed. It makes an unelected judiciary and private litigants preeminent curators of regulatory policy, contrary to norms of representative government. It breeds numerous errors in seeking to vindicate congressional intent, and it arrests regulatory policies whose implementation require larger financial commitments.”²⁴⁵ Explaining his appeal to end judicial review, he concluded, “The contention that judicial review of agency action is the hallmark of a free society or enlightened government is historically or otherwise indefensible. Genuine representative government cannot flourish when conventional wisdom doggedly insists that no government action is either lawful or legitimate until vetted and approved by a federal judge.”²⁴⁶

Building on the appeal to reduce the power of the judiciary branch, established throughout the conference, the final afternoon session discussed the establishment clause of the First Amendment, religion in schools, and the separation of church and state. Perhaps the words of panelist William Stanmeyer, president of the Lincoln Center for Legal Studies in Arlington, Virginia sum up the tone of the panel concerning the Supreme Court best, “By the 1960s and seventies, the Secular Humanist assault on the Judeo-Christian majority had received considerable endorsement by the Supreme Court, usually in euphemism and usually in disguised phraseology. But the goal was to drive Judeo-Christian understanding of mankind and purpose in life out of the public schools.”²⁴⁷ Likewise, the closing remarks of the conference, made by Judge Robert Bork of the United States Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit discussed the

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 15.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 16.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 116.

difference between interpretivism and noninterpretivism in constitutional law, with noninterpretivists being labeled “activist judges.”²⁴⁸

The foundation’s next large endeavor in judicial reform was the publication of *Criminal Justice Reform: A Blueprint*. The 1983 book, edited by Free Congress fellow Patrick McGuigan and Randall R. Rader, chief counsel of the Senate Judiciary Committee’s Subcommittee on the Constriktion and a Free Congress consultant, featured a collection of essays from members of the judicial and political community—many of whom were involved in the June 1982 conference. *Criminal Justice Reform* discussed a bevy of legal reform issues, notably rising crime rates, the war on drugs, mandatory sentencing, and bail reform. Edwin Meese, a top Reagan policy advisor and future Attorney General, wrote, “Similar conduct is often treated with such gross disparity that the principle of equality before the law is entirely lost. The current discredited and unpredictable parole system should be replaced with a streamlined system that classifies offenses and sets a fixed sentence according to their severity.”²⁴⁹ Such reform would take discretion out of the hands of judges and parole boards, ignoring the intricacy of many legal cases. Similarly, editor Randal Rader discussed bail reform in restrictive terms. He noted, “Under current federal policy (often used as a pattern for state criminal laws), a federal judge may only consider the likelihood that the defendant may not appear for trial when setting bail conditions. The federal judge may not weigh factors concerning the danger a defendant may pose to the community or

²⁴⁸ Robert Bork was later nominated to the Supreme Court by Reagan in 1987 after Lewis Powell announced his forthcoming retirement. His nomination led to a contentious Senate debate, and he was never confirmed. Another Reagan nominee, Anthony Kennedy was confirmed in his place. Bork’s use of these terms, interpretivism and noninterpretivism, should be understood respectively as the legal theories of judicial restraint, a belief that the Constitution should be interpreted with the Founders’ intent in mind, and judicial activism, a philosophy that the judiciary should play an active role in government by producing an interpretation of the Constitution with contemporary insight in mind.

²⁴⁹ Patrick B. McGuigan and Randall R. Rader, eds., *Criminal Justice Reform: A Blueprint* (Chicago, IL: Regnery Gateway, 1983), 19.

the likelihood the defendant may commit other crimes if released.”²⁵⁰ To remedy this he recommended Congress amend the Bail Reform Act of 1966 to:

(1) permit judicial officers to consider community safety when setting nonfinancial pretrial conditions of release, (2) allow the pretrial detention of defendants when no conceivable conditions for release are sufficient to ensure their appearance at trial or to ensure the safety of the community or of other persons, (3) authorize temporary detention of individuals arrested while free on some form of conditional release, and (4) provide procedures to revoke earlier release determinations for violations of the conditions of release.²⁵¹

Measures such as these would forgo the presumption of innocence implied by the due process clause of the Fifth Amendment. In sum, the measures proposed by *Criminal Justice Reform: A Blueprint* were targeted at increasing the severity of the punishment dealt by the criminal justice system, whether through mandatory sentencing or bail reform, the intent seemed to be making prisoners’ sentences both harsher and lengthier.

Again, in September 1983 the Free Congress Research and Education Foundation hosted a conference to discuss criminal justice reform and build on the ideas broached by the previous conference the subsequent publication of *Criminal Justice Reform: A Blueprint*. As before, an edited transcript of the conference was prepared by Patrick McGuigan, this time with the assistance of fellow Free Congress staffer and former Senate staffer, Teresa L. Donovan. Newt Gingrich’s remarks at the closing session of the conference made a distinction between the liberal welfare state and a conservative opportunity society. Applying these dichotomies to criminal justice reform Gingrich claimed, “Liberalism focuses on compassion for the criminal. A conservative opportunity society focused on compassion for the innocent ... Until we have as much compassion and concern for the innocent as liberalism has found for the guilty, I think we

²⁵⁰ McGuigan and Rader, *Criminal Justice Reform*, 91.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 110.

can expect to see evil abound.”²⁵² Gingrich’s remarks help to highlight the ideological and partisan divides at the heart of these reform efforts, offering insight into the ideological shift that facilitated a rapid increase in the prison population.

As the election of 1984 loomed near, the Free Congress Foundation began devoting energies to examining the electorate in hopes of conservative gains. *The Evangelical Voter: Religion and Politics in America*, a study undertaken by Stuart Rothenberg and Frank Newport, was one such effort. Like the 1982 study, *Ethnic Voters and National Issues: Coalitions in the 1980s*, Rothenberg and Newport sought potential avenues for conservative inroads by exploring evangelical voters, a political force often cited as instrumental to the Reagan campaign in 1980. The authors noted, “The sheer number of evangelicals and fundamentalists make them an interesting and potentially important political force. But while they are in the abstract a potential force they may not be a ‘practical’ force. Their political impact could depend on the extent to which religious beliefs determine, or more accurately shape, political beliefs.”²⁵³ To gauge this potential, the authors commissioned public opinion surveys from one thousand self-identified evangelicals in the United states. The answers collected were then compared to traditional demographic variables to determine the independent effect of religion on policy positions. The study asked participants to identify one or two crucial issues they would task their Congressmen to address. Rothenberg and Newport stated, “The responses to this question indicate that evangelicals have great concern about a range of subjects normally thrown together under the general heading of ‘social issues’. School prayer is the most frequently mentioned response, but evangelicals are also concerned about abortion, preserving religion and ‘cleaning up’ magazines

²⁵² Patrick B. McGuigan and Teresa L. Donovan, eds., *A Conference on Judicial Reform: The Proceedings* (Washington, D.C.: Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, 1983), 145.

²⁵³ Stuart Rothenberg and Frank M. Newport, *The Evangelical Voter: Religion and Politics in America* (Washington, D.C.: Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, 1984), 8.

and television.”²⁵⁴ They continued, “After social issues, evangelicals demonstrate concern about the economy ... Behind social issues and the economy is foreign policy. It is a distant third.”²⁵⁵

Discussing partisan implications of the study, the authors found, “With one or two exceptions ... party identification among our evangelicals is strongly related to various demographic measures, as we would expect, but that there is no *independent* impact of a person’s religiosity or fundamentalism (as measured in this study) and his or her party identification.”²⁵⁶ Instead Rothenberg and Newport identified education, occupation, income, race, and geographic location as the prime influencers of party allegiance.²⁵⁷ As such they conceded that mobilization of evangelicals would be best suited to target specific issues and candidates. In their own words:

The relevant point here is that these kinds of mobilization efforts are particular to certain *issues* and certain *candidates* in selected races. There is not going to be, in our opinion, a one-time massive mobilization of these people which will profoundly affect the American political system across races and across time through the years to come. This group of individuals is not, in short, comparable to other blocs, such as black voters, in this country. There is no built-in connection between an individual’s fundamentalist views and the Republican party. Perhaps this kind of connection can be built in the years to come (and President Reagan is attempting to draw it to his particular position in 1984), but this will be a difficult process.²⁵⁸

Despite the difficulty Rothenberg and Newport believed he faced, Reagan was able to tap into the evangelical support, and capitalized on Democratic Party attacks on prominent members of the evangelical community. When discussing the president’s overwhelming victory in 1984 the *Wall Street Journal* reported, “This year Democrats did the GOP’s work for it in the South, inexplicably attacking Rev. Jerry Falwell as if he were Ronald Reagan’s running mate ... The

²⁵⁴ Rothenberg and Newport, *The Evangelical Voter*, 35.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 83-85.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 149.

Democrats' treatment of the fundamentalist ministers may have been the last straw for a South that long since abandoned Democratic presidential candidates, but still stayed loyal in state and local races."²⁵⁹

Examining the results of the previous election cycle, the 1985 study by the Free Congress Foundation, *Business PACs and Ideology, 1984*, was authored by Stuart Rothenberg and Washington freelance writer David M. Becker. The study examined financial contributions from political action committees in the business community, while also defending the existence and actions of PACs. The study purported, "While virtually everyone agrees that *some* political action committees try to increase their chances for access to congressmen through campaign contributions, there is little evidence that congressmen trade contributions for votes."²⁶⁰ Citing political scientist Larry Sabato, the authors claimed, "a congressman's party, ideology, and above all, his constituency's needs" are better indicators on where their vote will fall, rather than financial contributions by political action committees.²⁶¹ The study found that:

While the growth in the number of political action committees has distressed some, our data indicate that there is still considerable room for growth in the corporate community. Less than one-third of the total number of corporate PACs listed with the FEC during the last campaign cycle gave at least twenty-five thousand dollars to all House and Senate races. Twenty-four companies in the top one hundred of the *Fortune* 500 did not have PACs giving twenty-five thousand dollars, and seventeen of them—including IBM, Procter & Gamble, Xerox, H.J. Heinz—did not have a political action committee at all.²⁶²

The authors noted, "The banking sector is a good example of the potential for corporate PAC growth. Only twenty-two of the *Fortune* 100 largest commercial banking companies had PACs

²⁵⁹ "Looking for Realignment," *Wall Street Journal* (1923 - Current File), November 9, 1984, accessed January 25, 2018, <https://search-proquest-com.www.libproxy.wvu.edu/docview/134954645?accountid=2837>.

²⁶⁰ Stuart Rothenberg and David M. Becker, *Business PACs and Ideology, 1984* (Washington, D.C.: Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, 1985), 2.

²⁶¹ Rothenberg and Becker, *Business PACs and Ideology*.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 9.

which contributed at least twenty-five thousand dollars during the 1983-1984 election cycle. Seven of the top ten banks made our list, but three—Chemical New York, First Interstate Bancorp, and Bankers Trust—did not.”²⁶³ Rothenberg and Becker’s findings argued that despite the countless dollars pumped into election cycles by corporate PACs, the business community was not utilizing their capacity to form political action committees fully. Indeed, the Free Congress Foundation seemed to be endorsing an increase in the financial contributions of America’s wealthiest corporate interests.

Similarly, the foundation’s 1985 publication, *Ousting the Ins: Lessons for Congressional Challengers*, edited by Rothenberg, also examined the past election cycle through the lens of eight Republican campaigns against incumbent Democrats in the United States House of Representatives. Like their previous postelection publications, the work examined variables such as campaign management and strategy, media, and campaign budget and finance. Rothenberg noted in his conclusion, “If there is one rule-of-thumb which is on the road to becoming a ‘campaign law, it is that challengers who do not run what might be called ‘attack campaigns’ cannot win ... A challenger must force the voters to take a close look at the race and determine that they made a mistake two years earlier. The only way to do this is to ‘expose’ the incumbent’s record.”²⁶⁴ Rothenberg also pointed toward the cruciality utilizing all aspects of a campaign—management, media, the candidate themselves, and issue framing—to create a cohesive message when he wrote, “As a general rule, winning campaigns seem to do everything just a little bit better than losing campaigns, and the winning efforts seem to put everything together in a more comprehensive and neater package ... Campaigns, by their very nature, are

²⁶³ Ibid., 9-10.

²⁶⁴ Stuart Rothenberg, ed., *Ousting the Ins: Lessons for Congressional Challengers* (Washington, D.C.: Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, 1985), 87-88.

team affairs. While each person has his own tasks and responsibilities, the entire unit must function smoothly if the final result is to be positive.”²⁶⁵

The publication of *Crime and Punishment in Modern America*, a collection of essays similar to *Criminal Justice Reform: A Blueprint*, served as the foundations next major effort in criminal justice reform. The 1986 collection, edited by Patrick McGuigan, now director of the Judicial Reform Project at Free Congress’s Institute for Government and Politics, and lawyer Jon S. Pascale focused on many of the same issues at the heart of their earlier publication—the reduction of crime through harsher deterrents, whether that be mandatory sentencing, asset forfeiture, or victim compensation on the behalf of the defendant. In the work’s conclusion, Republican congressman, Jack Kemp, noted “It is time to raise the costs of crime and reduce its rewards. The essays in this book demonstrate that this in not accomplished by increasing the length of sentences.”²⁶⁶ He continued praising the Reagan administration:

The certainty of arrest, conviction, and punishment are just as important. The financial rewards of criminal activity must be reduced ... the appointment of new judges has begun to turn the tide against crime. President Reagan and Attorney General [Edwin] Meese are dedicated to appointing highly qualified judges who take the ‘letter of the law’ seriously and believe in the perpetual relevance of our constitution.²⁶⁷

Indeed, the Reagan administration could point to the confirmation of Sandra Day O’Connor in 1981 and Antonin Scalia in 1986, along with the elevation of William Rehnquist to Chief Justice as conservative victories. Despite this, controversy over the administration’s judicial appointments remained a hot topic during the 1980s and inspired further research by Free Congress into judicial appointments.

²⁶⁵ Rothenberg, *Ousting the Ins*, 97.

²⁶⁶ Patrick B. McGuigan and Jon S. Pascale, eds., *Crime and Punishment in Modern America* (Washington, D.C.: Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, 1986), 408.

²⁶⁷ McGuigan and Pascale, *Crime and Punishment in Modern America*.

Indeed, many Reagan judiciary appointments met fierce opposition, most notably Edwin Meese to the position of Attorney General in 1985, Daniel Manion to the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit in 1986, William Rehnquist's ascension to Chief Justice that same year, and the proposed nomination of Robert Bork to the Supreme Court in 1987.

Considering these criticisms, the Free Congress Foundation published *The Judges War*, edited by Patrick McGuigan and visiting Free Congress fellow Jeffery P. O'Connell, in 1987. The collection of essays chronicled the supposed "judges war" of the mid-1980s, a battle not only to appoint conservative judges to prominent positions, but also an ideological struggle between the right and left over the interpretation of the Constitution.

Discussing the legal establishment and judicial activism at large, Dan Peterson, executive director of the Washington-based think tank, the Center for Judicial Studies, wrote:

At bottom, judicial activism consists of two related tendencies. The first is an increasing willingness by judges, either overtly or covertly, to ignore the plain meaning of text (whether of a statute, constitution, or a precedent) and to substitute instead their own views of desirable policy or outcome. The second is a trend on the part of the judiciary to expand continuously the types of cases the courts will decide, and the varieties of persons and institutions that can be compelled under their sway.²⁶⁸

Attacking this "activist" streak at the highest echelon of the judiciary branch, the Supreme Court, as a consolidation of power and a subversion of representative democracy Peterson argued, "The Founders were careful to circumscribe the power of the federal government within narrow and specific bounds; activist judges have burst those bounds."²⁶⁹ He continued:

Those who framed the Constitution recognized that all political power had its sources in the people, and could be legitimately exercised only by the representatives of the people; unelected activist judges have usurped the power of representative bodies and officials ... The Framers knew that freedom depends on

²⁶⁸ Patrick B. McGuigan and Jeffery P. O'Connell, eds., *The Judges War* (Washington, D.C.: Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, 1987), 212.

²⁶⁹ McGuigan and O'Connell, *The Judges War*, 226.

the rule of law, not men; activist judges are substituting their own views and policies for establish laws and precedents.²⁷⁰

O’Connell’s words in the closing essay drive home the themes of *The Judges War*. He claimed, “Nothing less is at stake than the proper functioning of the judiciary, the United States Supreme Court, in a constitutional republic. The fundamental question is the extent to which the judiciary must limit its constitutional adjudication to specific principles embodied in the Constitution.”²⁷¹ O’Connell discussed at length the dichotomy between the two competing models of judicial interpretation, interpretivism and noninterpretivism. Criticizing the tendency of noninterpretivism by the Supreme Court since midcentury, O’Connell contended ominously, “To have a life-tenured judiciary frustrate the people’s ability to rule by removing major decisional areas from the democratic process positions American in a situation comparable to that which compelled the nation’s founders to spill so much of their own blood.”²⁷² O’Connell concluded:

With the Reagan administration quickly winding down, Americans must recognize that it is impossible to overemphasize the next president’s proper understanding of these basic issues. With two nominations to the current Court, a president, any president, could dramatically change the understanding of the Court’s role and substantially redirect America’s proud history of republican government.²⁷³

Bold claims such as those present throughout *The Judges War* serve to illustrate the ideological and partisan drive behind the Free Congress Foundation’s campaign for judicial reform. While Free Congress operated in its think tank capacity, exploring judicial reform, its political action committee arm, Free Congress PAC, which between 1977 and 1988 received an additional 127,000 dollars from the Coors Foundation alone, supported Christian fundamentalists and

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 273.

²⁷² Ibid., 287.

²⁷³ Ibid., 300.

extremists Mark Siljander and Joseph Morecraft, allotting them their two largest donations made in the 1986 elections.²⁷⁴

In 1987, the Free Congress Foundation published *Cultural Conservatism: Toward a New National Agenda*, written by William S. Lind, director of Free Congress's Institute for Cultural Conservatism, and fellow FCF scholar William H. Marshner. The book, a collection of policy proposals spun into a political manifesto, explored a paradigm shift in conservative thinking moving beyond the Reagan administration. The authors' opening words read, "For much of this century, America's national agenda has been preoccupied with economics. The principal difference between liberals and conservatives has been defined in economic terms."²⁷⁵ They continued:

But beneath the surface, new forces and new ideas have been stirring. Already they have brought about a fundamental shift in electoral politics, as both parties have had to reach out to activist movements built around values, life-styles, and other non-economic issues. Although they are often castigated as "one-issue" interest groups, these movements are in fact the vanguards of a profound political change. The politics that carry us into the twenty-first century will be based not on economics, but on culture.²⁷⁶

Considering the perceived cultural degradation plaguing the country, Lind and Marshner viewed two possible responses. They described the first, cultural radicalism, as, "a commitment to refashion the culture of our society to make it conform to certain newly perceived moral imperatives or to certain allegedly scientific (especially psychological or ecological) requirements."²⁷⁷ The second response, cultural conservatism, was explained in the authors' words as:

²⁷⁴ Bellant, *The Coors Connection*, 35; This figure is in addition to the 150,000 dollars Bellant cited as the financial contribution of the Coors Foundation for support of operations to the Free Congress Research and Education Foundation in 1988.

²⁷⁵ William S. Lind and William H. Marshner, *Cultural Conservatism: Toward a New National Agenda* (Washington, D.C.: Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, 1987), 1.

²⁷⁶ Lind and Marshner, *Cultural Conservatism*.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

The belief that there is a necessary, unbreakable, and causal relationship between traditional Western, Judeo-Christian values, definitions of right and wrong, ways of thinking and ways of living—the parameters of Western culture—and the secular success of Western societies: their prosperity, their liberties, and the opportunity they offer their citizens to lead fulfilling, rewarding lives.²⁷⁸

Citing the roots of cultural conservatism in the work of American conservative political theorist Russell Kirk, and more recently in the work of the New Right and the Religious Right, Lind and Marshner offered this new political theory as a potential ideology to center the conservative movement around as Republicans questioned the direction of the party after Reagan's departure from office.

Central to cultural conservative reform was the family. According to the authors, "Put simply, the family is the basis of a civilized society. The motivations which drive men and women to do what must be done if society is to prosper ... are rooted primarily in the family. The family is, in this sense, the bedrock of civilization."²⁷⁹ As such, they set an agenda to restore traditional nuclear families and reduce divorce rates, pregnancy outside of marriage, abortion, and premarital sex. The authors suggested encouraging states to eliminate "no fault" divorces, prohibiting public schools from teaching "explicit and value-free" sex education, and a reversal of *Roe v. Wade* as means to achieve these ends.²⁸⁰ Likewise, educational reform was tied to the family, with Lind and Marshner claiming, "A strong family, focused on its traditional task of raising children, is a *sine qua non* of effective education of the next generation."²⁸¹ Religion also played a crucial role in the ideology as the authors discussed throughout the work its positive contributions to American society. Concluding fatefully, the authors wrote:

The completion of a new national agenda, one based on culture rather than economics, one that reflects the fundamental cultural conservative insight that

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 8.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 35.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 41-43.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 51.

traditional culture is a functional culture must draw on far more talent than we can offer. But we can and do offer a beginning, and a challenge. The challenge is writ large: it is nothing less than the restoration of our national greatness.²⁸²

Indeed, as the Reagan years ended, conservatives understood the cruciality in finding new ideological directions for Republicans and conservatives in general, as one of their greatest champions and homogenizing forces stepped down from the nation's highest office. Paul Weyrich's Free Congress Foundation hoped to play a central role in this new discussion with its own brand of conservatism, just as it had done some fifteen years earlier when it was formed as the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress to help elect conservatives critical of the liberal establishment in the wake of the Watergate scandal. In almost two decades, the organization had evolved and grown in ways which even Weyrich, with all his concern for political strategy, could seldom have imagined. When the group was first organized in 1974, as the foil to National Committee for an Effective Congress, even the most seasoned Washington staffer or politician could not have predicted the organization's influence on campaign financing and grassroots organization. With funding from wealthy patrons, the Committee married the money of economic conservatives and corporate interests with the forces of social conservatives reeling in the cultural upheaval of the postwar era. Through the Committee's efforts, conservatives made inroads in understanding effective campaign financing, political strategy, and coalition politics. When the organization restructured to become a think tank, they brought this same dedication to campaign research and policy reform. The organization, unlike the American Legislative Exchange Council or the Heritage Foundation, offered Weyrich a more direct tool of action to combat the moral deterioration of the country, that was overshadowed by the economic concerns his other think tanks primarily dealt with. As such, the Free Congress

²⁸² Ibid., 145-46.

Research and Education Foundation offered at the end of the Reagan years, a new conservative paradigm, placing social issues, rather than economic concerns, at the heart of the debate going into the next decade and the century beyond.

Chapter 5—Conclusion

At the onset of the postwar period, the United States had established itself as one of the two major world powers and the de facto leader of the free world. An achievement such as this seems especially compelling given that just sixteen years before, the United States was at one of its most vulnerable states in its history. When Franklin Roosevelt took office in 1932 Americans cast a decidedly strong vote in favor of the expansion of government to combat the Great Depression. On the back of a coalition comprising the Democratic Party machine, labor unions, the working class, ethnic and racial minorities, the agricultural South, and intellectuals, the Roosevelt administration pushed through New Deal legislation targeted at relief for the jobless and poor, economic recovery, and reform of the financial sector to prevent future economic catastrophes. When the United States entered World War II, New Deal legislation such as Wagner Act of 1935 and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, ensured that government played an active role in wartime production, allowing the working class to experience significant economic and social gains.

Considering these gains, the business community, which had come under great scrutiny with the beginning of the Great Depression, set out to mobilize a campaign to subvert the New Deal and the liberal coalition that supported it. These efforts touched workers on every social level, targeting unions and big government as the enemy of the free market. As the economy sputtered in the 1970s, these attacks began to grow teeth in the minds of many Americans. The institutions that Paul Weyrich and his network of wealthy conservative contacts established in the early seventies, worked diligently to preach free market values while simultaneously reaching out to social conservatives to create a diverse coalition targeted at a rollback of liberalism. Weyrich's organizations helped to pave the way for a conservative ascendancy by adopting the infrastructure that had ensured a Democratic majority through midcentury. From his

offices in Washington, Weyrich launched the necessary think tanks and political action committees to spur a revolution in both in ideology and campaign strategy. By the end of the 1970s, Weyrich's institutions were finally paying dividends.

When Ronald Reagan assumed the presidency in 1980 it was hailed as a political revolution. Conservatives around the country rejoiced as he entered office with the promises of massive tax cuts, a curtail to big government, increased American strength around the world, and a revival of traditional American moral and religious values. Indeed, to many of those who voted for Reagan in November 1980, the administration promised a return to normalcy after the societal strife of the 1960s and 1970s. While Reagan followed through on his proposed tax cuts, it became clear early on in his administration that he was not quite the ideological revolutionary he painted himself as while on the campaign trail—conceding political battles when it proved beneficial. According to historian Robert O. Self, “[Conservative’s] disappointment with Reagan, their chosen candidate, bordered on outrage. Nowhere was this more evident than among the most passionate foes of abortion ...”²⁸³ To many hardline conservatives who had supported Reagan, the president had failed to come through on many of his promises. Abortion remained legal, Reagan had abandoned his most extreme promises of governmental dismantling, and the AIDS crisis continued to go unanswered. As such, the far right found its candidate for the 1988 Presidential election not in Vice President George H.W. Bush, who represented a continuation of the Reagan administration, but instead in a televangelist. Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Broadcast Network became the model candidate to much of the New Right.²⁸⁴ Robertson's bid eventually floundered in the face of Bush's overwhelming appeal to a larger

²⁸³ Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2012), 395.

²⁸⁴ Self, *All in the Family*, 397-98.

audience. Eventually, the New Right lined up its support for Bush to avoid splitting the ticket. Bush won convincingly on a national level, capturing forty states, however, his coattails proved far shorter than conservatives had hoped, leaving Democrats as the majority in both houses. As the age of Reagan gave way to the more moderate Bush era, conservatives had experienced both great gains and devastating failures.

When Paul Weyrich first began setting in motion the establishment of a conservative coalition with the founding of organizations such as the American Legislative Exchange Council, the Heritage Foundation, and the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, he did so from the ground up. The American Legislative Exchange Council and the Heritage Foundation helped to spread conservative ideology at both the state and national level, resulting in a conservative intellectual movement centered on privatization, tax cuts, and bureaucratic reduction. Drawing on the success of liberals to mobilize at the grassroots level to bring about change, he created a similar framework within the conservative movement with the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress. Weyrich's efforts in the 1970s helped create a coalition that played a crucial role in securing Ronald Reagan the presidency in 1980. With their chosen candidate in office, Weyrich's organizations produced conservative policy proposals at a prolific pace. While Reagan had failed to fulfill all of the promises on which hardline conservatives supported him, his enactment of many of these measures had pushed the country decidedly to the right of center. Likewise, the work of the New Right had forced the mainstream Republican Party platform further to the right through a blend of religion and fiscal conservatism. As the Democratic Party retreated further toward divisive identity politics, the Republican Party peeled away at the New Deal coalition by mobilizing politics around social issues and economic concerns, in effect becoming the party of the "common man." As Americans looked toward a

new decade, it had become clear that politics in the country would prove to be no less divisive in the years to come.

In the years that have followed American politics have taken many turns. After four years of George H.W. Bush, Americans elected Bill Clinton in 1992, the first Democratic to capture the presidency since Jimmy Carter in 1976. Just two years later, the Republican Party secured perhaps its greatest victory, gaining a majority in the United States House of Representatives for the first time since 1952, propelling Newt Gingrich to Speaker of the House. Clinton, while labelled a liberal, served as a perfect illustration of America's rightward turn. Indeed, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the "don't ask, don't tell" policy banning openly homosexual citizens from military service, the "Defense of Marriage Act" that legally defined marriage as a union between one man and one woman, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, and the repeal of Glass-Steagall legislation stand out as particularly conservative-oriented policy.

The turn of the century saw the return of a Republican to the White House, with the election of George W. Bush. Capitalizing on the scandals of the Clinton administration and targeting his opponent, Vice-President Al Gore, as a devout liberal and environmentalist, Bush campaigned on the idea of "compassionate conservatism," drawing on the appeal of plain-folks politics, while promising tax cuts across the board—a clear indication that he had learned from many of the shortcomings of 1978 campaign for the United States House discussed by the Free Congress Foundation over twenty years prior. Bush's presidency was marked by divisive moments including, wide-spread tax cuts, the subsequent "war on terror" following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, passage of the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act and the No Child Left Behind Act, the financial crisis of 2007-2008, and the ensuing Great Recession. The heavy criticisms of

the Bush administration in its second term and the accompanying economic downturn had once again called into question the reputation of the business community and the financial sector, and it appeared as if Americans were once again ready for alternatives.

The Obama administration that followed set out to enact the largest financial reform in the nation's history since Roosevelt's New Deal. With the passage of the Dodd-Frank Act in 2010, the Obama administration aimed to promote consumer protection with increased financial transparency while shielding American taxpayers from bailouts of corporations deemed "too big to fail." The measure drew opposition from many Republicans, with votes in both the House and Senate falling within party lines. Likewise, the Obama administration's health care reform, the Affordable Care Act, drew the ire of right-wingers, with the opposition forcing a government shutdown in 2013, even though the Affordable Healthcare Act owed its ideological roots to the Heritage Foundation, and was based on the model implemented by Republican governor and 2012 presidential candidate Mitt Romney. The 2010 landmark Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, also stands out as an especially important moment in the administration's history, with the Court ruling that independent expenditures by nonprofit corporations, for-profit corporations, and labor unions are protected under the free speech clause of the First Amendment. To many political pundits, the Obama administration marked a return toward more centrist politics, despite the increasingly partisan divide in the country.

In 2016, the country took perhaps its most startling turn when Donald Trump won the Electoral College, securing him the presidency. Trump, a real-estate mogul and reality television star, with no political record, successfully rallied Americans behind his peculiar brand of populism, upsetting virtually every political commentator in the country. Trump rode to victory

on a platform that preached probusiness politics while simultaneously placing blame upon Washington, D.C. and the political establishment. The election proved favorable for Republicans across the board, who secured a majority in both the Senate and House of Representatives along with a record number of governorships. In the wake of the Trump presidency it has become increasingly clear that the American political culture is in a dire state, with the Republican Party actively working to peel back the final layers of the social welfare net, privatize almost every government function short of defense, and undermine workers' unions with a state-by-state implementation of right-to-work laws. Indeed, even the modest reforms under the Dodd-Frank Act now face opposition with the passage of the Financial CHOICE Act by the United States House of Representatives in 2017, a bill designed to roll back provisions of the reform.

Increasingly scholars are beginning to look toward the influence of outside agents as the cause for the gridlock and ideological divide in the nation. As noted, labor historians have outlined the impact of business community entities such as the Business Advisory Council, the Committee for Economic Development, the National Association of Manufacturers, the Chamber of Commerce, the American Enterprise Institute, and the Business Roundtable on the political discourse of the country. Recently, Historian Nancy MacLean published *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan*.²⁸⁵ Her work chronicles the endeavors of American economist, James M. Buchanan, to extol his theory of "public choice economics," examining how government officials make political decisions. MacLean links Buchanan and his funding with Charles and David Koch, the billionaire brothers and owners of Koch Industries, whom in recent years have become the subjects of much debate surrounding the current state of politics in the United States.

²⁸⁵ Nancy MacLean, *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan* (New York, NY: Viking, 2017).

Indeed, one would be hard pressed to argue that the Koch brothers are not serious players in the American political system. In 1977, they founded the libertarian think tank, the Cato Institute, undoubtedly spurred on by the conservative activist wave Paul Weyrich buoyed in the early 1970s, and David ran as the vice-presidential candidate for the Libertarian Party in 1980. Since then they have donated large sums of money to various candidates whom they believe embody similar ideals of free enterprise. Likewise, they have made financial contributions to numerous organizations such as the Mercatus Center at George Mason University, a think tank devoted to free-market-oriented research, the American Enterprise Institute, the American Legislative Exchange Council, and the Heritage Foundation. Where Paul Weyrich and Joseph Coors began, the Koch brothers have continued.

Paul Weyrich passed away in 2009, somewhat distanced from the Republican Party mainstream, choosing instead to continue his work with the Free Congress Foundation in pursuit of alternative institutions to preserve American religious and moral beliefs in the later years of his life. Despite this, his work in the 1970s to actively organize a majority centered on the long-standing conservative values of capitalism, coupled with a political bloc organized around social issues, through institution building, profoundly impacted the political history of the United States. Weyrich, the shrewd strategist he was, spent the 1970s creating an infrastructure that facilitated a conservative intellectual revolution, blending corporate interests with religious and moral convictions. His network of conservative contacts in Washington was almost endless, and further attention is due to his work not only with the American Legislative Exchange Council, the Heritage Foundation, and the Free Congress Foundation, but also his connection to countless other conservative endeavors throughout the second half of the century. It is my hope that the

research presented here can contribute to the growing scholarship devoted to examining America's rightward turn, and the forces driving it.

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